EDUCATION.



A TALE FOR 1817.

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EDUCATION;

OR,

ELIZABETH, HER LOVER AND HUSBAND.

A Tale for 1817.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

By ELIZA TAYLOR.

> Our restless passions, like tempests on the main,
> Drive Reason from the guidance of our lives,
> And leave us shipwreck'd on a barb'rous coast. SOUTHERN.

VOL. III.

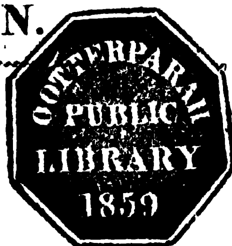
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1817.

EDUCATION.



CHAPTER I.

Since such are the scenes of this valley of care,
Since each pleasure is mingl'd with pain,
Still let me the raptures of sympathy share,
And my bosom shall scorn to complain

MRS. ROBINSON.

A Duel and a Journey.

ELIZABETH scarcely dared confess, even to herself, the anxiety she felt, lest captain Prince and Mr. Dermont should meet; the proud insolence of the one, and the fiery honour of the other, made it so highly probable that a duel would be the event. As her fears had surmised, so it was: captain Prince, little as he must feel when he heard his tool was in the hands of justice for the crime he had

instigated her to commit, and mortified as he was by Elizabeth's contemptuous rejection of his love, was yet more galled that the man who should deliver her from his power should be the one he most feared as his rival, when he had found his heart first attracted towards Elizabeth. Unable to enter into the feelings which had agitated Dermont's bosom, to prompt him to the active vigilance he must have used to acquaint himself with the machinations they were employing, he could imagine no passion but love, with the certainty of success, which could have animated him to such an exertion. He had agreed not to see Mrs. Seymour till the evening of the day which should have carried his destined victim to Bath; and it was not till Dermont had left the house, that he had acquired the particulars which filled his bosom with rage. He was entirely unacquainted with his residence, but leaving a note with his servant at Mrs. Seymour's,

mour's, he had desired it might be presented when he next appeared at the house.

Dermont had foreseen this. Had the challenge been given before Elizabeth had been placed with her friends, he would have refused it; but now that she was under the protection of them, he rejoiced at the opportunity it afforded him of chastising the unmanly conduct of captain Prince.

The day fixed for their meeting was the one after Mr. Darnley's arrival, and in settling his worldly affairs, Dermont, in bequeathing the whole of his property to Mrs. Beverly, felt a pleasure in the idea, that he should in death contribute to her comforts, almost amounting to a wish that he might not survive. He left a note for Miss Beatrice Darnley, to be delivered in case of his death, in which he entreated that the event which has-

tened it might be kept from her as long as possible. When he rose to attend captain Prince, he wrote to Mrs. Beverly, to apprise her he was going an unexpected journey, and could not therefore have the pleasure of seeing her again. He prepared this in case he should be wounded, well knowing her sensibility would be deeply hurt in the idea of being the subject of a duel.

The seconds proposed an accommodation, but it was not very likely the affair should be compromised in this way, where each thought himself the injured person. Mr. Dermont had the first fire—he was not quite convinced that even the laws of honour could sanction a breach of morality—it did not take effect. Captain Prince was more fortunate; and indignant that one who had so palpably violated every law, human and divine, should escape, Mr. Dermont again fired, and captain Prince fell.

fell. He was immediately taken home, and Mr. Dermont followed to hear the surgeon's opinion, regardless of his own wound, which was slight. No immediate danger was apprehended. Edmund's was very slight, and as he was prevented seeing Elizabeth, he sent his farewell note, which had before been prepared.

Elizabeth was surprised by its receipt, but not sorry; her mind, ardent and enthusiastic in the love of virtue, proud to indulge in the pleasure of his society, she felt the danger of her situation, but she felt it more in reference to the world's opinion than distrust of her own firmness. She had indeed loved Edmund, and her passion had usurped a power which ought only to have been cherished towards Heaven; but since her marriage, she had so sedulously avoided every employment which could remind her of him—every idea which could even re-

motely be associated with him was so rigidly forbidden, that his power over her affections was lost, or, as she imagined, on the birth of her child, transformed to maternal love. They had never met till the morning of Mrs. Seymour's detection, and then she found him so altered, that she scarcely feared a return of that love which had been cherished under such different appearances. The glow of animation borrowed from the heart, when love and hope lingered to give life to the expression, the sense and spirit so happily blended with the sensibility of a candid and liberal mind, the vivacity of youth, the bloom of health, were all—all fled; but the spirit chastened—not lost, the feelings of an impassioned heart subdued—not extinguished, and that bright ray of genius springing from the soul, the reflective intelligence which is the emanation of an enlightened mind, imparted to his countenance that touching expression the bosom of sensi-

bility

bility must ever acknowledge, which gives the feeling so difficult to analyse, but which it is impossible to resist, and which can never be subdued.

The cold respect of his manner, which now scarcely entered the boundaries of friendship, and which had formerly spoken so plainly the language of the most passionate love, the entire loss of her own beauty, the sober correctness of her manner, and, above all, her broken spirit and mind, which she fancied alienated from the world and its pursuits, shielded her from the fears for her own peace, which the unexpected appearance of Edmund might be expected to produce; and she cherished the friendly feelings now glowing in her heart, and which he had elicited, as a sort of renewed compact with the life she had relinquished. In Beatrice she found the friend most calculated to sooth the feelings which had been so cruelly tried in

the late distressing scenes; refined, artless, and retiring, she soothed without seeming to enter into the sorrows which agitated her friend. Under her care, Elizabeth rapidly recovered her health and spirits; and the five days which Mr. Darnley had proposed remaining from them having been extended to a week, she found herself, at the end of that time, strong enough to make a third in the chaise which took them down to Elmwell; and Beatrice, with the most amiable sweetness, managed to ease Elizabeth of the fatigue her attendance on the little Matilda must naturally prepare for her in a thousand ways; and in her innocent smiles and broken language, Mr. Darnley himself seemed to lose the recollection of the sorrows of his early life. In her artless actions he traced her future character, and he entreated that Elizabeth would never relinquish the charge of her education—" In her," he cried, " I trace the embryo virtues you

have

have discovered in such maturity. Oh cherish them with the care they deserve —direct them, guide them, so shall she avoid the errors which have been so fatal to your happiness."

CHAPTER II.



Flown are those scenes of bliss, those halcyon days,
Those fairy dreams, that baseless hopes could raise;
When all my soul, youth, love, and glory fir'd,
Thrill'd through my heart, and songs of joy inspir'd—
Those days are flown. *Pains of Memory.*

Should'st thou depart this night, and we at waking never
more find thee! WALLENSTEIN.

Death.

POIGNANT as were Elizabeth's feelings, as she approached the shades which had been the scene of her infant sports, they were yet of that description which can admit the voice of sympathy—which can listen to the soothings of friendship; it was that sort of tranquil suffering which can ask and receive the relief of tears. The kindness of her friends was reward-

ed

ed by the calm melancholy she gradually assumed, and she listened to their affectionate welcome to the parsonage, with a smile which essayed to show that she felt, while she acknowledged, their attentions; and she eagerly anticipated the hour, when, in seeking the retreats of her youthful hours, she could unobserved indulge the sorrow the retrospection created in her mind.

The spring now put forth her first blossoms; the earliest songsters of the grove welcomed her arrival in strains of melody, as Elizabeth sought the wilderness where so many of her happiest hours had been passed. The cold breath of winter had not yet entirely yielded to the influence of the sun's cheering beams, and as it whistled in hollow murmurs through the trees, and rustled among the dead leaves with which autumn had covered the bosom of the earth, and which had not yet been removed, Eliza-

beth, whose imagination remained unchilled by adversity, recurring to her own fate, fancied a similarity with the scene before her. "Like them," she cried, "did hope's fairest blossoms appear to deceive, but the rough blasts of adversity came and blighted their fairest promises." These ideas were continued, till at length she arranged them in the following stanzas.

Yes, these are the trees, 'neath whose shelter so often,
In life's glowing morning I lightly have stray'd,
To view the rich tints of the foliage soften,
As twilight extended her mantle of shade.
Here young hope early smiled, every grief to extirguish;
Here I wept; but my tears were of joy, not of anguish;
Here my heart fondly sought a sweet friend to distinguish;
And youth's warmest emotions here first I display'd.

Yes! this is the spot where enraptured I've wander'd,
To hear the sweet nightingales sing from the thorn;
And these the lov'd scenes where I've thoughtfully pon-
der'd,
Enrapt by the visions of youth's smiling morn.

And

And here once the soft song through the valley resounded,
And here once my light heart to the dance gaily bounded,
And here, by the beauties of nature surrounded,
I have pluck'd life's sweet roses, unheeding the thorn.

Yes, 'neath the kind shade of these trees still reposing,
I can mark the gay flow'ret expand to the day;
I can still view the spot, each wild beauty disclosing,
Glow vividly bright to the sun's cheering ray;
I can still mark the leveret sportively playing,
And the moon in bright silver the dark vale arraying,
And her tribute to music sweet Philomel paying,
Still invite me their charms to partake as I stray.

But in vain Nature smiles to the bosom of sorrow,
For *now* desolate beams this lov'd spot to my view;
In vain from remembrance a solace I borrow,
She treacherously pilfers regret's sombre hue;
And those joys which glow'd brightly in youth's early morning,
With pleasure's gay tint every object adorning,
As if with avidity cold reason scorning,
Like a meteor burn brightly, then shrink from our view."

Amid these tranquil scenes, a month soon

soon passed away. Her kind and attentive friends would yet hear nothing of any arrangement which should take her from them. In the quiet and regular attention to her religious duties, Elizabeth found the best, the most certain balm to her wounded mind. Her conversations with Mr. Darnley were long and interesting; he saw and lamented the bias her mind had taken; and had he been less scrupulously exact in the theoretic part of his duty, Elizabeth had certainly become a convert to that doctrine which appealed to her fancy, and which was so captivating to the enthusiastic tenor of her mind; but in her exalted estimate of human nature, she deemed the reasoning powers capable of comprehending the most abstruse truths, and the mysteries which this faculty could not investigate, she decided must be founded in error. Of faith, without a reference to the understanding, she had either a false or an inadequate idea;

and

and yet there were moments, when, lamenting the inquiry she had so eagerly pursued, she wished a repetition of those feelings which had carried her, in earnest and fervent prayer, to a forgetfulness of this world, and its vanities, pleasures, and vexations. To another and a better, then, she deemed a regular observance of stated duties would infallibly carry her, without a reference to her moral conduct, or without considering that the comprehensive term of Christian duty must comprehend the one, as indubitably connected with the other.

Here too she had leisure to contemplate the mystery attending the disappearance of her sister; and her anxiety led her to disclose all she knew of her story to the ears of the good pastor, and his benevolent daughter; but here she could gain no clue to the unravelling the mystery. Mr. Darnley saw in it remorse unconnected with piety, and

flying

flying to romance as its substitute. Beatrice, judging from the feelings of her own pure mind, avowed her belief that, unable to bear the smiles which she was conscious of not deserving, Frances had withdrawn, to pass her days in penitence and sorrow.

Not so Elizabeth. The roses and the dimples had revisited the cheeks of Frances ere her elopement took place; and penitence and sorrow marked not her manner, even on the day of her disappearance; yet she was far from suspecting that, in the arms of a lover, she was entering with avidity into the gaieties of the season; and she shuddered as she retraced her manners towards Frederick Darnley; yet she *would* not admit the supposition, that the recent and terrible death of the father of her child could so soon be forgotten.

She now received from her still-faith-

ful Bertram the valuables she yet retained in her possession, with an account of the manner in which the sum she had required upon them had been placed in her hands. Conjecture was again at a loss where to fix this generous action; she had many friends whom she believed capable of it; but accidental circumstances convinced her that it was not them she would most immediately have referred it to. For one moment she listened to the whisperings of her heart, which declared that in Dermont she should recognise the donor; but facts seemed to tell strongly against it; he must be in London at the time the money was left; and she severely reprobated the feeling which still fondly pointed to him, as one who still retained a warmer interest than cold esteem in her welfare.

She had received a letter from Walter Darnley; he had not forgotten his early friend;

friend; she was endeared to him, by the manner in which she had conducted herself in the trials to which she had been subjected; and he concluded by entreating her to bear in memory, that in him she had a friend, who would reckon those the most fortunate moments of his life, which could be devoted to her service. This letter gave her almost unmixed pleasure; but it told her she should not see him, as he intended going to London to his brother's, instead of coming down to Elmwell. He was still at college; and notwithstanding his eccentricities, was beloved and respected.

Elizabeth could not help sometimes painfully contrasting the attentions she received from this good and respected family, with the almost total neglect of her near connexions. She had written on Frances's arrival in London; but no answer had been returned to her letters, and she was therefore not a little surprised

prised at being one morning summoned down to receive sir George and lady Worthing, the latter of whom, flying to her, burst into tears, calling her her dearest sister, and availing herself of every epithet to express her sense of her goodness, and the unmerited afflictions to which she had been subjected; yet in the conversation which followed (for the Darnleys, who were in the room when she arrived, quitted it almost immediately), though the most hyperbolical expressions of sympathy and condolence were used, there were so many allusions to the terrible *change* in her situation, the mortifications she would be subjected to from those with whom she had associated, and hints of the censure to which her imprudence, in entering into a hasty marriage, without consulting her best friends, and those who, knowing the world, could have advised her to her advantage, that had she devised a sys-

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tem of amnesty, she could not have succeeded better.

Sir George, when he met her, gave her hand a kind pressure; he spoke not. but the sympathy of his look and manner evinced that he felt her sorrows. Their visit, however, determined Elizabeth to fix on some plan, which should accelerate her removal from the parsonage; but it was retarded by an unlooked-for and most afflicting event, the death of Mr. Darnley.

The day had been passed in his usual routine of duties, and he sought his pillow after he performed his usual religious exercises. The morning came; the hour in which he usually summoned his family to prayer passed away, and he was not visible; this was so uncommon a circumstance, that Beatrice sought him in his study; he was not there; she rap-

ped

ped at his sleeping-room door—no answer was returned; she entered; the curtains were drawn closely round the bed, and he seemed in a pleasant sleep. So placidly happy was the expression of his countenance, that she would not awake him, but went down, and apprised Elizabeth of the circumstance.

Elizabeth, who had now learned from bitter experience to anticipate evil, regarded the circumstance as so extraordinary, that a something, almost amounting to a presentiment of the truth, flashed on her mind; and she herself, after rapping at the door, entered the room, and softly approaching the bed, anxiously watched to see if any motion of the bedclothes indicated his breathing; she could discover none; she touched his hand, which was thrown upon the counterpane; it was cold as marble; she was convinced her fears were realized. For one moment her fortitude forsook her;

it

it seemed as if she had lost her only remaining parent; and she stood the statue of despair. The suspension of her faculties was but momentary, for even the love, the gratitude she felt for him, contributed to calm her grief, that she might be rendered useful to the family.

She secured the door of the room, and again sought Beatrice, who, approaching her, said—"My dearest Elizabeth, you have waited too long for your breakfast. You look pale, and your eyes are heavy; I will pour out your coffee."

"No indeed, Beatrice—a frightful dream——"

"Oh for shame! what, Mrs. Beverly suffer a dream to oppress her spirits!"

"Nay, my dear girl, suffer me to tell it, and I think its singularity will strike you. I had been in a storm at sea; the vessel had been labouring, till all expected she must become a wreck; but a calm succeeded; you and your father

appeared,

appeared, and the wind and the waves obeyed you: we pursued our way, and arrived within sight of land, when your father, who was standing by my side, vanished. Again the wind rose, the waves ran mountains high, and a dreadful billow had nearly carried you off the deck; still you were unacquainted with the direful catastrophe I had witnessed. It was fated for me to communicate it."

"Elizabeth, what mean you? Your voice is solemn, your eyes fill with tears; you will indeed almost persuade me to participate in your superstition."

"Hear me out, my dear friend. Notwithstanding your late escape from death, methought it was become necessary to inform you of your father's fate. I approached you, and," she continued, taking her hand, "pressed your hand thus, as I exhorted you to remember the motives of consolation you had so often heard that dear parent utter, as supports under the afflictive dispensations of Providence.

I begged

I begged you to reflect how fondly, how ardently, he anticipated the time when he should meet Him who died that he might live. *That time is come!* he stands now before his Maker! I am unequal to the task of affording consolation: think of that parent's admonitions —though 'dead, he yet speaketh."

Beatrice burst into tears—"What is it you mean, Elizabeth? why do you terrify me thus? Oh! pray relieve my anxiety!"

"Then, my dearest girl, call to mind all those precepts I have before referred to, and suffer your heart to imagine the greatest affliction which could assail it, that the stroke I have to impart may be lightened by the comparison."

Elizabeth's voice faltered, and her face was so full of sorrow, that Beatrice cried out—"My father is dead!" Elizabeth's tears flowed freely. Beatrice, hiding her face in the sofa, seemed absorbed in grief; she raised her face from it—"In

mercy,

mercy, relieve my suspense! Your last words yet leave a shadow of hope, for what greater affliction could befall me?"

"Your father, Beatrice, is a Christian, and is now receiving the reward of his virtues; think of your feelings, had he died an impenitent sinner."

CHAPTER III



—————— To solitude,
To nature, and to God, she gave her youth.
Hence were her passions tun'd to harmony;
Her azure eye oft glisten'd with the tear
Of sensibility, and her soft cheek
Glow'd with the blush of rapture. *Mount's Bay.*

Sisterly Affection.

ELIZABETH was surprised on the following morning by the receipt of the following letter:

"MY DEAR ELIZABETH,

"Sir George has just received Mr. Darnley's letter, and we are much pained by its contents, as we think a residence in this neighbourhood, after every circumstance is considered, would be the very worst step you could take; it would not only serve to remind you

more

more forcibly of the pleasures you have lost, but must be a continued source of anxiety to your connexions, who, moving in a genteel sphere of life, would be hurt at the sight of so near a relation under the embarrassment of your present circumstances. The house where sir George had apartments previous to his marriage, is indeed in the hands of the same tenant, and he has, of course, a right to their use; but as we make a point of coming to them for a few days every summer, should we give them up to you, we shall be under the necessity of taking others; and sir George unites with me in thinking, that the money which would be thus expended, would be more useful to you than the rooms. I could say much more on this subject, but will only add, that my actions (I should hope) must have proved the interest I have taken in your misfortunes. My heart aches because I cannot relieve them. I should be happy to

 contribute

contribute something; Mrs. Linley will certainly do the same; and nothing but a conviction that I am right in thinking that a cottage, in some remote part of the kingdom, would be better suited to your circumstances, could have induced me to refuse Mr. Darnley's request. He has promised much for you, and I should hope will not depart from his professions. With respects to him, and love to the good Beatrice, I am, my dear sister, sincerely yours,

LOUISA PROTEUS."

This letter surprised Elizabeth not a little; from its tenor she imagined that Mr. Darnley had requested for her the use of the two rooms sir George had occupied on his first introduction to her family; but the request had never been sanctioned by her. She had too completely understood the character of lady Worthing to voluntarily become a sup-

pliant;

pliant; and the selfish arrogance her letter breathed, her pompous general offers of assistance and pecuniary aid, inflicted a pang, which in all her misfortunes she had scarcely known.

Her plan, however, was fixed; she had determined to be independent as far as possible; she had declared this to her kind host and his daughter, and with their assistance had arranged, with a milliner in the neighbourhood, for a supply of fine work, by which means she trusted to be able to support herself and child till she should receive remittances from India; for though the thought that she was deserted by her husband sometimes flitted across her brain, she never suffered it to dwell long enough to assume the form of a possibility, much less would she allow it to be probable.

About a mile from the Lodge, upon a little nook of about twenty acres of land,

 contiguous

contiguous to the estate appertaining to her mother, stood a cottage, the residence of an industrious and happy couple, whose simple history contained an instance of self-denial which had made them an object of interest to our little group in their days of youthful happiness. The present possessor of the Lodge had found means to purchase this farm immediately on his coming into possession of the estate, and soon managed to expel the old tenants, in order to take the land into his own possession; and on Elizabeth's arrival at Elmwell, it was with a feeling of bitterness she heard, that her good friends, with whom she had eaten strawberries and whey curds, had been compelled to quit the neighbourhood; but as soon as she had arranged to continue in Elmwell, the idea of appropriating the cottage to her own use occurred to her. Its neatly-whitened walls, its thatched roof, almost embosomed in the orchard that surrounded

it—

it—the neat borders of flowers that emitted their fragrance beneath the rustic casement which gave light and air to the dwelling, promised a quietness and repose, a sort of screen from the world (which she no longer wished to encounter, or to recall to remembrance), desirable for her harassed spirits and worn frame; and immediately after Mr. Darnley's interment, she communicated to Walter (whom this melancholy occasion had summoned to Elmwell) her wishes.

He made the necessary application, but the estate being now on sale, could only gain from the steward a promise, that she might occupy it conditionally, to quit it immediately, if demanded by the purchaser. She hesitated not to agree to these terms; and in about a month was put into possession of her new dwelling, which consisted but of four rooms, two on the ground, and two on the first floor. A country girl of

 fifteen,

fifteen, a cow, a pig, two hens, and a cat, comprised the whole of her establishment.

But under this humble shelter she recovered her health and her tranquillity; for here she saw her child blooming in youth and health, imbibing ideas from every object and every passing event: in directing these ideas, in communicating oral instruction, and cheating her into the first rudiments of reading; in giving her habits of industry and attention; in weaning her from the few indulgences she had known in London and Bath, and which now seemed inimical to her future happiness, from her humble prospects—a year soon passed away, unmarked by any event, save sundry visits to the parsonage, now in possession of Walter, for his father's patron was still living, and with him Beatrice resided.

Of

Of Frances she could gain no information; there all was still wrapped in mystery. Of her husband she heard nothing; and lady Worthing and Mrs. Linley seemed to have forgotten she was in existence. The former, indeed, when she had first gained quiet possession of her cottage, had made her a visit, and all the seductive charms of her manner and conversation were called into force, to convince her dear Elizabeth of her affection, and of her admiration of the calm dignity with which she supported retirement. Our heroine was astonished, till by the little gate which divided her flowers from the lane leading to her habitation, she saw captain Bennet; the glance which then met lady Worthing's view, conveyed a reproof to her mean criminality; it gave to her bosom, more strongly than she had ever before experienced, a painful sense of superiority, even in poverty and sorrow. It convinced lady Worthing, her assistance in

screening this intrigue from the public eye could never be obtained; and she inwardly vowed never to forbear seeking for an opportunity to lower the proud virtue of her who thus rose innately triumphant over all the advantages of wealth and worldly splendour.

These reflections so quickly passed through the minds of our heroine and her sister, that ere her rustic attendant could open the door, Elizabeth made her appearance at it, and amid all her anxiety, could not avoid a smile at the tone of affright with which she cried out " a gentleman, ma'am !" for this was a species of animal which had never before found entrance beneath her rustic roof, at least since Elizabeth had been its mistress. Captain Bennet was evidently agitated, and he wished to impute it to his having accidentally discovered her to be the inhabitant of this place, which having attracted his atten-

tion

tion by its rustic beauty, had led him to inquire who was its owner; his surprise was detailed at full length.' Elizabeth made but little reply to this harangue, but leading the way to her sitting-room, he followed, and calling out, "Good God!" again paused at the door. But lady Worthing, who had still the keen glance of Elizabeth in her view, found an effort at hypocrisy impossible; assuming, therefore, her usual fascinations, softened by an appearance of pensive pleasure, she greeted his arrival, with as little appearance of surprise as she really felt.

Tea was soon brought in, and praises of her fresh butter and rich cream were liberally bestowed. Elizabeth's conduct was determined upon; she laboured to introduce a general conversation, and began by remarking on the beauty of the country at this season, and congra-

tulated captain Bennet on having gained leave of absence just at this period.

"Oh, by the Heavens, madam!" he replied, "if nothing but the beauty of the country had tempted me here, it might have remained till it was lost in the hoary age of winter before I should have ever found it out."

"And yet," replied lady Worthing, "I remember the time when I have heard you expatiate, with almost as much pleasure as this dear enthusiast, on rustic joys, the happiness of the peasantry, and the enchantments of a cottage."

"That was before I knew the world. When a man once enters into life, he loses all these romantic chimeras; the refinements of society render him a very unfit associate for the sons of labour, who cannot open their lips without annoying his ears, nor move a limb without offending his vision. Poets

may

may sing of delight, of which they know nothing but from books; and love-sick girls, amid all the luxuries which fashion can invent or ease adopt, may greedily swallow a tale which will enable them to gratify an inclination for some favourite shepherd—to complain of mamma's cruelty, and papa's severity; but such things are only laughed at now by men of the world."

"If by men of the world," cried Elizabeth, "you mean exclusively that race of beings who vote themselves in the fashion, because they wear a coat of a fashionable make, or by adopting the modish slang, your definition is perfectly just; but if by men of the world you mean those who, with sense enough to judge for themselves, have spirit enough to assert their right, and discernment enough to detect imposition, even amidst the false glare of show, I disallow the observation. A man of refinement, in seeking the country,

dreams

dreams not of finding amongst those you have correctly denominated the sons of labour, opponents for philosophical disquisition or instructors in the sciences. In nature, unsophisticated by the world, and uncultured by education, he loves to discover the genuine play of character, the workings of the heart, and the force of passion; and his study is amply rewarded by the happiness he witnesses, unaided by the factitious means which those in polished society deem indispensable for the support of existence."

"But, my dear sister, you surely do not mean to assert, that amidst the deprivations to which you condemn yourself, you are happier than you would be in the circle where you have ever moved?"

"Certainly not, and it is thus those who write on the subject throw derision on the opinions they advance, by asserting that happiness is found only in a cottage;

a cottage, where, with the deprivations to which they subject the cottager, they unite the refinement which sickens at the sacrifices to which it is exposed."

"You think," said captain Bennet, "that it is habit alone which can reconcile the peasant to his lot. This, at any rate, does not go far to prove his exclusive happiness."

"Pardon me, sir; though I allow, and am convinced, that habit goes a great way to reconcile us to any mode of life, it is not to this circumstance alone I would refer the happiness of those in the humbler walks of life. Unacquainted with the views and wishes, the hopes and fears, which agitate the mind of the great and powerful, in the bosoms of their families they find employment for those emotions which nature has so wisely implanted in our breasts; and by the labour of their hands, their minds, unused to higher flights, follow their occupations, dwelling with pleasure on the

the idea, that from their exertions spring the comfort, and even the support of those in whom every affection of their nature is blended; and the happy consciousness of having performed their duty, gives a zest to their few pleasures which no other circumstance could bestow."

Elizabeth unintentionally uttered these last words with an energy springing from her enthusiasm in the cause of virtue; the colour mounted to the face of captain Bennet, his features became agitated, and he at length rose and walked to the window, to conceal his confusion; but lady Worthing, who was determined *not* to apply the observation to herself, again attempted to resume the conversation, determining in return to mortify her whom she could not lessen.

"I am, indeed," she cried, "truly happy to find, in the contemplation of rural

rural innocence, you can find a consolation for having lost that society which must have been so delightful to a mind formed as yours is. But let me, since you are a philosopher, know how you support the total absence of amusement; how, you can, all at once, relinquish the splendid ball, the crowded theatre, and all the varied amusements, which diversified your time at Bath?"

"Though I do not," said our heroine, faintly smiling, "arrogate to myself the high character you have invested me with, yet I will confess, that in the article of mere amusement, I do not feel the sacrifice. To fill the intervals I can spare from the employment of my needle, I have my child; her playful gambols, and infantine caresses, afford a delight which mere amusement never can impart—which appeals directly to the heart, and expands its noblest faculties; but were she of an age to associate mind with the imagination, and the warm

warm impulsive feelings of the heart, I should feel my anxieties quite at ease respecting her future subsistence—I should scarcely have a wish to enter again into those scenes I have quitted: but my mind languishes for society: the beauties of nature impart a delight which can only be conceived by those who have been engaged and enrapt in their contemplation; but this delight is incomplete, unless somebody can share the impression they leave. In my evening walks, the setting sun, gilding the tranquil scenery, enlivened by the vestiges of animated nature which every where meet my view, fill my heart and elevate my mind. For a moment I am lost in contemplation; but I have no companion to receive and elucidate my observations—I have no motive to desire a return, for no friend waits with smiles to hear my description, and to meet my enthusiasm, or playfully combat what they would perhaps deem

my

my flights of fancy. But how I am wandering! I at least prove my seclusion from the world, by giving you the musings of a solitary rustic."

Alas! she knew not—she understood not, or rather, her proud heart would not suffer her to understand, that the entire dependance of the creature upon the Creator—his entire submission to his will, reliance on his wisdom, and trust in his goodness, would have placed before her a safeguard delightful as estimable. Could she have directed her eyes solely towards another life, she would have found a resting-place for her hopes, a bound for her wishes, and a consolation for her sorrows, which no earthly participation could have given her. But she was the child of passion, though of genius; proud in conscious merit, she deemed that *little* minds only needed the aid of religion to direct their footsteps and shield their principles. She considered the trials she had escaped

the

the best proof that her heart was invulnerable to temptation; and felt not that the attack, touching not the passionate emotions of her bosom, held out no chance of overcoming what even her prejudices, as well as feelings, revolted from.

Elizabeth was deaf to the hints of her guests that a walk would be agreeable, and even consigned her little Frances to the charge of her rustic attendant, when she retired, in preference to leaving her sister and her lover for a moment. Captain Bennet at length took his leave, and the following morning brought sir George to her door in his curricle; he vehemently reproached Elizabeth with not accepting his offer of the rooms at the farm; and by thus doing, added a new and cruel instance of the duplicity of the being her heart had so long selected as its cherished idol.

CHAP.

CHAPTER IV.

It was an ambush of sweet snares, replete
With love, desire, soft intercourse of hearts,
And music of resistless whisper'd sounds,
Which from the wisest steal their best resolves.

Iliad.

A Child saved to endanger its Mother.

In retracing the actions of our heroine, we have found her sometimes entangled in the mazes of error—of error, however, which might almost be said to spring from the exuberance of virtue, rather than the influence of guilt. Her unfortunate marriage, and the circumstances arising out of this connexion, had, by bringing the native enthusiasm of her character into play, given to her actions an appearance of virtue, brilliant rather than solid, though proceeding from qualities in themselves truly estimable,

mable, if indulged under the influence of religion and the curb of reason. Painful indeed it will be, to follow her in the paths of guilt, to which sophistry, in union with the impetuous feeling which has ever swayed her heart, will be found to conduct her—to describe those qualities destined to command our admiration, to sweeten the communion of domestic life, and to render even goodness itself more beautiful, debased by their service to passions wild and lawless, because subversive of the interests of society, and the well-being of the community at large.

The enthusiasm of the moment being past, the remembrance of the terrors she had known being faded away, and the health she had lost being re-established, Elizabeth, susceptible, ardent, and enterprising, felt her present quiet wearisome and vapid. She longed again for some scenes, which, calling her energies into action,

action, should give her imagination play, and awaken those strong feelings which were now all centered in the comparatively tranquil love she bore towards her child; and while her hands were employed upon the task which now formed her chief means of support, her fancy was erecting visionary fabrics, and peopling them with a race of beings which her heart reproached for calling again to her bosom; for if the person of Edmund Dermont was not there clearly defined, the qualities of his mind, the affections of his heart, and the powers of his understanding, were always prominent in the scenes in which she mentally wandered.

It was in a beautiful morning, early in July, that Elizabeth, having thrown open her casement to inhale the fragrance of the mignonette which bordered her little garden, heard a strange voice inquiring in the kitchen if Mrs. Beverly was at home? and being answered

in

in the affirmative, desired to speak to her. She advanced to the door, and discovered a clownish-looking man, who roughly asked what business she had there? The question surprised and almost startled her; as she replied to his inquiries, by demanding what he meant by it? he said that he wished to know why she remained at the cottage, after the notice to quit had been served?

Elizabeth protested she had never received any notice.

"Not receive it! why did not you," he cried, turning to the girl, who stood stupidly listening to the conversation, "did not you take it? and did not I desire you would give it to your mistress on her return, for you said she was walked out?"

"Oh, that! Miss Frances has that."

"Well, that is your look-out; so you may find yourself another house directly, for master wants this."

So

So saying, he turned on his heel, and walked off.

This was, indeed, an incident to arouse and call into play the feelings which had so long lain dormant. The cottage had become very dear to her, and where could she find another so exactly suited to her circumstances? She immediately took her bonnet, and her mind was so occupied on this subject, that she neglected to leave any charges respecting her little Frances, who, playing in the garden, did not notice her absence. She met Beatrice, but Walter had walked to the cottage of a sick neighbour; she was therefore compelled to wait his return, when she detailed the case to him, and referring to her agreement when she took the cottage, said she was bound in equity, if not in law, to vacate the dwelling; and she only hoped to find some place sufficient to support her cow, and afford a shelter for herself and child.

 Mr.

Mr. Darnley promised to make every inquiry, and endeavoured to prevail on her to finish the day with him; but to this she was obliged to give a negative; and after Walter had agreed to wait on her in the evening, she returned to the cottage; her first inquiry was for the little Frances.

"Mercy, ma'am! what, didn't she go with you?"

"With me, Betty! have you then not seen her since I left you?"

"Oh yes, ma'am! she was here not long ago."

Elizabeth staid to hear no more, but hurrying away, searched the orchard; the little girl was not visible. It now occurred to her, that in a small inclosure behind the house, was a pond: she was crossing, to go towards it, when a shriek from within drew her attention, and "she's drownded!" in the broad accents of her damsel, met her ear. All she

had

had ever felt was ecstacy to this moment. She did not faint; the intensity of her feelings forbad a suspension of sense—she darted towards the door, and heard a voice, to which she was familiar, giving directions for warm blankets, &c. at the same time inquiring for the mother of the child, which Elizabeth now caught distractedly to her bosom; and "she is not dead," broke from her in accents which seemed so earnestly to implore an assenting answer, that it would have been impossible to undeceive her, had her hopes been without foundation; but this was not the case; a few hours restored her to her fond mother, who, as soon as she felt assured her child was out of danger, began to consider where and when she had heard the voice of the stranger who had saved her; to wonder how he had met with the child; and to lament that her maternal cares had so absorbed her, that no expression of even civility had passed her lips.

 Towards

Towards evening, the little girl having sunk into a refreshing sleep, she quitted her bedside, to take some tea; and hearing a rap at the sitting-room door, she cried, "Come in;" supposing it to be her friends from the parsonage, she rose to meet them, but remained rooted to the spot, for her eyes, in encountering Edmund Dermont, recalled him as the person who had brought home her child: for a moment she was immoveable and speechless; but recovering her recollection—"Is it possible," she cried, "that it could indeed be you, to whom I am indebted for the safety of my——" Her voice faltered—emotion agitated her every feature; and a consciousness of the manner in which she was betraying the secret which she had so long cradled in her bosom, impervious to all the world, and hidden even from herself, overcame her; she sunk on her chair. He approached, and entreated her to be calm, while his deep voice, trembling

with

with emotion, inquired, with much interest, for the child. A moment sufficed to restore to Elizabeth her recollection; she desired he would take a chair, and partake with her the refreshment she was preparing. Having answered his questions, she begged to know, where and how he had met with her little girl?

He said he was rambling through the meadows, when he heard a spaniel, who was with him, barking violently, and in a way to excite his curiosity; he followed the sound, and found him by the side of a pond; as soon as the dog perceived his master, he ran towards him, and from thence to the pond, as if to endeavour to prevail on his master to follow him; he did so, and just as he arrived, saw the child rise to the top of the water. She was easily saved.

"I have not yet," said Elizabeth, "offered you my thanks; but thanks

are so poor to express the feelings which agitate a mother for the restoration of her child!"—But her blushes, the tear which trembled in her eye, her quivering lip, all spoke more forcibly than words—they penetrated to the heart of Dermont.

The sensibility of Elizabeth had always delighted him; it was the brilliancy which dazzled; but the sensibility he had before witnessed was of that ardent, passionate character, which captivated the senses, and bore down every thing before it with unresisting sway. This was of that mild and gentle character which subdues the heart, and penetrates the soul. It was of that description which imagination gives to the inhabitants of heaven—of a purely ethereal nature, undebased by any thing worldly. His feelings were not alarmed; he believed he was only admiring excellence, as he replied to expressions so grateful

grateful to his affection. His look, his voice, his manner, borrowed from the tone of feeling he indulged, were irresistible. The moments which followed were dangerous, for each was cherishing a delusive sentiment; each fancied the feeling which glowed at their heart the pure offspring of virtue; and they parted with these impressions.

Elizabeth resumed her place by the side of her child, but not, as before, to dwell exclusively on its preservation. The idea of him who had restored her, the widowed wife, her sole treasure, was blended with her joy; and never had she loved the little Frances so well—never had she leaned over her with emotions so vivid; they surpassed even those which first gave her to her arms; for to the maternal fondness which nature inculcates was now added, the delight she had experienced from the fruition of her wishes, now revivified

 by

by the danger of its being entirely snatched from her. The animated pulsation at her heart did not surprise her; it was a rapture purely arising from the restoration of her child; and her sentiment towards her preserver merely gratitude.

CHAP-

CHAPTER V.

There are who know not the delicious charm
Of sympathizing hearts. *Psyche.*

Yes, it was love, if thought of tenderness,
Tried in temptation, strengthen'd by distress,
Unmov'd by absence, firm in every clime,
And yet—oh, more than all!—unchang'd by time.
The Corsair.

A Discovery to give force to Temptation.

THE following morning brought Mr. Dermont again to the cottage; he was met by the playful Frances at the gate, and by her fascinating mother at the door. Her glowing cheeks and sparkling eyes spoke her pleasure at his appearance, and his call was extended beyond the time prudence or politeness required.

In the afternoon, Beatrice Darnley came down; she had only that morning heard of the accident the child had met with, and had at the same time understood that no danger was apprehended. She warmly congratulated Elizabeth on her restoration; and after expatiating on the subject, proceeded to say that her brother had seen the man who had so roughly insisted on her quitting the cottage, and had agreed with him for Elizabeth's continuance there. She staid the evening; and for the first time since her abode here, our heroine regretted her determination. Her feelings, once vivid, were now of that nature which renders any society burthensome. Perhaps even the company of him who created them had been less pleasurable than their indulgence; but they were too delightful to be analysed, had she even sought to define them.

The following day passed heavily to

our

our heroine; she would not allow herself to believe it was that she had wished Dermont to call, and that his neglecting to do so had an effect on her spirits, but it must be the confinement, and she would in the evening seek the air, to dissipate the headache under which she was labouring. Having consigned her little girl to repose, she mechanically directed her steps towards the pond which had so nearly proved the grave of her child. The most lively, the sweetest emotion, connected with the idea of her presence, found entrance into her bosom; and while she fancied herself only indulging in maternal fondness, a passion, subversive alike of her peace and morals, was insidiously finding an entrance into her bosom: deeply ruminating, she pursued her walk, but unheeding the beauty of the setting sun, unmindful of the prospects which burst on her view, and unconscious of the fragrance of the flowers which a soft and gentle breeze was

wafting round her, she attended only to the indulgence of mental pleasure till roused from her reverie by the person to whom her thoughts were directed. Having inquired for her health, and informed himself of the welfare of her child, he introduced a conversation, and continued by the side of Elizabeth till she had completed her walk; and then promised to bring her a poem he had made the subject of discussion on the following morning. He wished her a good night, yet still he lingered to point out the effect produced by the moon, now rising and appearing just behind a cloud, till, sensible of his imprudence, he tore himself away.

On the following morning, Elizabeth unconsciously took more than usual pains that her gown should be arranged becomingly to her form; her prettiest morning cap was selected, and a collar calculated to display her fine and snowy

throat;

throat; but her most dangerous attraction was that brilliant expression which the expectance of Edmund created, and his arrival perfected. Having stolen an hour from her repose, her little household affairs were arranged previous to his arrival, the jars were filled with fresh flowers, and Frances promised her new doll when the visitor arrived. Nor did he keep her long expectant; the morning was most delightful. Edmund, in a pause of conversation, had taken up the volume; yet he did not make much progress in the poem, for its subject was canvassed; nor did he take his leave till the cloth was spread for dinner, and then, laughingly, said—"I would, you see, have spared you the fatigue of again receiving me, for you must not, cannot punish me by refusing me the gratification of hearing your remarks on the whole of the poem;" and begging to know if she would be at liberty on the following morning, he took his leave.

And

And now scarcely a day passed but some event occurred to bring together two beings, who, though loving virtue, could not determine on a sacrifice which could alone ensure a continuance in its paths. Elizabeth silenced the monitor in her bosom by arguing, there could be no wrong in an intimacy creating a greater stimulus to good than any thing the world can offer—" Does not his smile uniformly follow every exertion of virtue or effort of mind? had I no other safeguard, the apprehension of forfeiting his esteem would preserve my husband's honour inviolate; and who is injured by this sweet union? I am too humble for the world to regard, or even hear of my actions. My husband's peace of mind would, even granting he has still enough of affection left for any action of mine to affect him, not be marred by what he can never know. No one could object to my intimacy with a female friend, and does not our friendship ex-

ist

ist even under a more delicate form than female friendship? Providence seems to have raised up this new source of happiness to repay me all the sacrifices I have made to duty, and shall I throw from me what I value more than life?"

Another circumstance occurred too just at this time, to strengthen all her prepossession in his favour, by adding another link in the chain of gratitude which bound her to him, with a strength not inferior to love itself.

Her faithful Bertram, now that her mistress had again a habitation of her own, could not determine on settling in another situation till she had once more seen her, and again fondled her little Frances; she therefore, quite unexpectedly, presented herself before Elizabeth, just as she was preparing for her evening's walk.

walk. Though she had made no engagement with Edmund, she well knew that his steps would be directed in search of her; but her ramble now was out of the question. To slight one she so highly valued, and one whose affection for her had been so tried, was impossible; much less, by consigning her to the rustic who now formed the whole of her establishment, could she shew she considered her in no other light than as an attendant; immediately, therefore, throwing aside her hat, she prepared tea, which was the refreshment Mrs. Bertram chose; and after the first and most interesting inquiries were passed, Elizabeth desired to know if any light had been thrown to discover the stranger who had advanced the money on her valuables? She replied, that she had called on the jeweller just as she left Bath, but he had neither seen nor heard of him since the day which gave

her

her possession of the money; that he was evidently as much a stranger to the name of the gentleman as herself.

Some conversation on this subject followed, and they had not exhausted the theme when it was interrupted by the appearance of Dermont. He paused a moment at the door, and advanced with a heightened colour, as he entreated pardon for his intrusion; he merely called to hope that she was well, as he feared the child's or her own indisposition had kept her at home.

Mrs. Bertram left the room before this speech was finished, and Elizabeth slightly mentioned her as a humble friend, to whom she was much obliged, and whose arrival had kept her from her usual walk. As soon as he was gone, Mrs. Bertram eagerly sought Elizabeth, to mention her having identified the stranger in Mr. Dermont.

To

To pourtray the various feelings which now struggled for empire in the bosom of Elizabeth is impossible. At the generosity of her friend she was not surprised; she was always sure it had constituted a part of his character; but to avail himself of an incident so unexpected in the way he had done, betrayed something more than mere generosity; it proved sensibility to plan, and delicacy to confer a favour, united to a disinterested attachment, and a warm interest in her happiness; and this effort of a noble mind gave her the most heartfelt pleasure, as it exalted her heart's idol in her estimation; but all her pleasure resulting from the circumstance was chilled by the reflection that she thus was become an object of charity to the man whose admiration, esteem, and tenderness, she was solely desirous of appropriating. Her estimation of the sentiment which she felt towards Dermont was so lofty, that she scarcely regretted

the

the ties which prevented his uniting his fate with hers, lest, by becoming more intimately acquainted with her, she should lose the very high respect his conduct and words alike evinced; it was a feeling hard to be defined, and only to be traced to the singular circumstances which had attended its creation and progress. To her young and susceptible heart, the person who had saved her from a danger, however trifling, must have been an object of interest; but from a man like him, formed to captivate the female heart, it was now he became an object of love, and of love the most tender—she called it hopeless; but had she narrowly analysed the emotions which accompanied his idea, she would have found that the probability of again meeting him was accompanied with the recollection of the general attention she had received, particularly from that class of men with whom,

though

though exalted far beyond them, she ever associated his idea.

After an acquaintance was formed, she gave herself, with all the enthusiasm of her character, to the enjoyment of a passion, delightful as it was romantic; and while all the world doubted (or affected to doubt) his truth, these suspicions, acting upon her mind, seemed, if possible, to draw him yet nearer to her soul. Had he not told her his conduct must be mysterious? and long, very long, was it ere she would, even to her own bosom, acknowledge his neglect; but once allowed, every feeling of her lofty mind was aroused, and that he might never know the anguish he had given to her heart, she offered herself a voluntary sacrifice. Prudence *claimed* the conquest, but it was passion carried the victory. By a singular combination of circumstances, he was next presented to

her

her as her preserver from dishonour; the warm feelings this circumstance excited were scarcely cooled, and she had, with a sigh, consigned him to oblivion, or to be thought on with the remembrance of the other joys her youth had known, ere he again appeared the saviour of her child. Could she, therefore, banish the man who seemed so mysteriously interwoven with her destiny? but yet, could she ever forget that he had forsaken her, when he might have secured her his own? Whence could arise this mystery? was it not, that though admiration, esteem, and even tenderness, were cherished by him towards her, these sentiments were not animated by that passion which by some is thought necessary to cement a union for life? It was these reflections which, while they lulled the softer and more dangerous feelings of her nature, yet precipitated her fate. Had she believed that in his bosom glowed a passion warm and ardent as imagination

imagination could paint, she had flown him, for then she had been aroused to a sense of her danger.

CHAP-

CHAPTER VI.

For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword.

Proverbs.

A Visit.

SCARCELY had this unexpected but not unwelcome visitor quitted Elizabeth, ere she received notice that sir George and lady Worthing intended to spend the commencement of the shooting season at Elmwell; and at the same time was given to understand, that her company at the farm could not be dispensed with; but she had now become attached to her cottage. Its immediate environs were connected with the most pleasurable ideas, and her hours of total retirement had been latterly so delightfully

fully broken in upon, that it was no longer a dreary, but a rational solitude, affording opportunities for reflective contemplation unspeakably dear to her heart; she therefore civilly declined the invitation; but lady Worthing was not to be so baffled, when she wished to carry a point; and a few cutting sarcasms, pointed at Dermont, as the immediate cause of her refusal, so much alarmed the pride and delicacy of Elizabeth, that, without farther opposition, she prepared to change her residence. But Dermont did not, so vehemently as she expected he would, participate in her mortification. Chagrined at his apparent indifference, all the pride inherent in her character was again roused; and in their subsequent interviews (for he was a constant visitor at the farm), it added an apparent capriciousness to her behaviour, which lady Worthing, by every innuendo which she thought would have effect, added to.

Lady

Lady Worthing had now imbibed a passion for rambling, and Elizabeth, who loved the country, willingly accompanied her in the delightful walks she had so often gone over in her youth; but the pleasure she had anticipated in these strolls was quickly at an end. Captain Bennet was, it seems, the object her sister had in view when she proposed them. The first time he joined them, Elizabeth was determined to believe it to be purely accidental; but having, on the following morning, again met him, she, after captain Bennet's departure, frankly informed lady Worthing, that she could not again be her companion, to sanction these clandestine meetings.

" And how long, my very prudish sister, is it since you have taken this most violent objection to a married woman walking, *without* the *knowledge* of her *husband*, with a *former lover*?

Pray, have any *very recent occurrences* given birth to the suspicions which are labouring in your bosom?"

The words were keen, but the looks of triumphant malice which accompanied them were yet more cutting; for a moment Elizabeth lost all self-command, all presence of mind; but a consciousness of *comparative* (her own misguided judgment called it perfect) innocence gave her strength to answer—"I well know to what you allude. I have seen Mr. Dermont—I have walked with him; but I had never seen him—never walked with him, had he ever wounded my ears with a declaration of passion, which to a married woman must be an insult. He had never sought me, but that an opportunity was afforded of conferring an obligation; and insensible must I indeed be, did I not, by any means which virtue and honour allow, evince my sense of his goodness."

"And

"And the world, no doubt, will deem you perfectly right in so doing; they will think your *retirement* well chosen for this purpose—they will deem even the devotion of your life too little to express the sense you entertain of his services—and the world shall render you the praise due to your unexampled gratitude—the world shall know of your acceptance of a loan from this formerly faithless lover; and as you both happen to be agreed as to the manner in which the debt is best discharged, the world shall know that every day is devoted to him, either to enliven his walks in the fields, or to assist him to kill time in his lounges at the cottage—or, when the moon shines with peculiar brilliancy, to animate his admiration by the poetic images and delightful fancies with which your warm imagination abounds."

She continued much longer in this

strain, for Elizabeth saw, in this cruel glance at her actions, the view in which the world would behold them, through the medium in which lady Worthing would pourtray them; for well could she understand, that in the way she would condemn her conduct to the most cruel censure, even her best friends would only conjecture that she was seeking to extenuate her actions, even while her malice was aiming to exclude her entirely from society.

These reflections almost engrossed her attention, to the exclusion of what lady Worthing was urging, till she was again roused by—" And I suppose, even the most rigidly virtuous cannot condemn your gratitude to the man who has even found an habitation for you and for your child; who purchased, at a high price, the cottage, because it obstructed a beautiful prospect from his house; and who is nevertheless content to relinquish

a view

a view of inanimate, for what is so superlatively lovely in animated nature."

"What *is* it you mean, lady Worthing? Mr. Dermont is not the possessor."

"Oh, indeed, your story is more romantic than even I could have imagined; you did not then, it seems, know that you were a tenant to Mr. Dermont?"

"Never till this moment."

But a thousand little circumstances now met her view, which convinced her that lady Worthing was correct in her information. But even now, when her prudence was shocked by the implication the world would not fail to put upon this circumstance, her treacherous heart hailed it with transport; for it exhibited the delicate consideration of Dermont in a new and very amiable point of view.

But the pleasure this idea imparted

was not suffered long to engross her. From lady Worthing she now understood that her silence might be purchased, by her consenting to receive for her captain Bennet's letters; and while she made this proposal, her voice, look, and manner, received an instantaneous change.—“ I have been harsh, my dearest Elizabeth—I have appeared unfeeling; but it was the interpretation you placed on my connexion with captain Bennet which forced it from me; as a sister, and as one who loves you tenderly, you ought to have judged me more favourably. If you are bound by gratitude to Dermont, I am united by remorse to Bennet. Nothing, therefore, remains for me but to solace his misery by every means in my power. I will see him—I will write to him. If you do not aid me, other means must be found; and should I be betrayed to sir George, Bennet's arms must be my refuge; and you will have the consolation

of

of reflecting, that it was your virtue which drove me to such a desperate resource."

Elizabeth was touched—her feelings were moved; notwithstanding her conviction of lady Worthing's unworthiness, her manner was irresistibly insinuating; and it was with tears that she acknowledged, that she could not agree to sanction an intimacy so disgraceful.

"It is well," replied her companion. "I will follow your praiseworthy example. Major Beverly does not know the advantage his daughter is deriving from the instructions of her *mother's friend*; but as he would not, perhaps, be exactly the tutor the major would choose for his child, he might wish to have her removed from those whose attentions are so much engrossed by each other. I shall, at any rate, inform him how she

is circumstanced, and then he may please himself."

In vain Elizabeth expostulated—her arguments were unanswered, her solicitations unattended to; and to preserve to herself the society of her child, she consented to the disgraceful office to which lady Worthing had appointed her.

CHAPTER VII.



Have angels sinn'd, and shall not man beware?
How shall a son of earth decline the snare?
— — — — — —
This is the scene of combat, not of rest;
Man's is laborious happiness at best.
On this side death his dangers never cease;
His joys are joys of conquest, not of peace.

The Last Day.

ELIZABETH soon found her new slavery almost intolerable, for every morning was devoted to walking, and every morning brought captain Bennet to join their rambles, in which they were not unfrequently met by Dermont; but his society was now unattended with the pleasure she used to derive from it; for as soon as he made his appearance, captain Bennet devoted himself to her in a manner too pointed to escape the notice of

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one so interested as Dermont; and Elizabeth fancied that he forgot the disappointment his eyes alone expressed in the *tête-à-tête* with lady Worthing, which followed his first address. But the month which sir George had purposed spending at Elmwell was now expired, and Elizabeth again returned to her cottage, but not again to the enjoyment of that treacherous peace which she had known previous to this visit. A sense of humiliation embittered every reflection, and a feeling of degradation clouded every hope. Her manner lost that dignity which a proud consciousness of virtue can alone impart, and her mind became susceptible of the same enervating effects. The lofty tone of exalted sentiment which had given force to every expression that would have stamped the nobleness of her character was lost, and its cessation was soon exemplified in the manner of Dermont, which now losing that scrupulous

respect which had hitherto kept his passion, or rather the declaration of his feelings, within the limits of friendship, now assumed an expression of bewitching tenderness—and Elizabeth fell.

Oh, ye, whose hearts warmest feelings have been all centered in an object of lawful and virtuous love—whose attentions were met by reciprocal affection—who have never known the force of temptation! and ye, whose early passions and ardent feelings have met the control of a parent's watchful love! while ye start with horror from the crime which she has perpetrated, yet drop the tear of pity o'er her sufferings, for though the child of error, she was not yet the slave of guilt. The sight of her child produced a burst of remorse which had nearly proved fatal to her; but her conscience was lulled, the whisperings of remorse were hushed, by the pleadings of tenderness; and she gave

 herself

herself entirely up to the enjoyment of a passion which seemed to have acquired force from the tedious period it had yielded to a sense of duty.

The threat which lady Worthing had uttered relative to the destiny of her child induced her yet to preserve a secrecy, and to consent to impose on her friends the semblance of correctness she was conscious of no longer preserving; but she avoided, as much as possible, the society of those she regarded: to receive proofs of respect she was conscious of having forfeited all claim to, and expressions of affection she was too well aware she did not merit, ached in her heart with a force the most cutting reproaches could not have yielded. But the shock was momentary; the first expression of love, the first glance of affection which the eyes of Edmund imparted, again recalled her to those visions of tenderness which her imagination had

pictured

pictured in such glowing colours, and which her heart imbibed with such ardent love; and, in the enthusiasm of the moment, she deemed even the pleasures of friendship cold and insipid, and a trifling sacrifice to make at the altar of love; or rather, she deemed that love should at once usurp the privileges of friendship, and be at once her consoler and monitor.

But a dreadful punishment even now awaited the adulteress. Four months—four little months, had already passed, and her guilty passion still triumphed over every better principle; and, indeed, it seemed to have gathered strength from time. Cold winter's gloomy hours were hailed with renewed pleasure; for now her evenings were devoted almost solely to the society of Edmund, and a walk through beating rain or driving snow seemed only, from the contrast, to add new charms to the snug room, enlivened by a blazing fire.

For

For some days Elizabeth fancied a gloom seemed to hover over the brow of Edmund, which all her store of wit, her animated conversation,, or even her tender caresses, failed to banish. His manner too had undergone a change no less extraordinary; instead of the uniform tenderness at once so soothing and delightful, it was now chequered by starts of love and chilling neglect. Afraid to confess, even to herself, the change, she would not hint to her lover that she felt a dereliction of his affection possible; but instead of the sweet glow of delight which ran through her frame, and soothed her to dreams of happiness, when he quitted her, tears of bitterness moistened her pillow. Each night did she promise that the next day should end her dreadful perplexity, and each morrow did she shrink from an explanation which might take from her all her happiness; for her dark and cheerless fate seemed to owe all its pleasures to the light reflected

flected from the brilliant halo his affection threw around it. In vain would she now have resumed the unaffected tenderness which had always evinced itself on his approach; instead of the rosy blush of mingled joy, and that sweet confusion which conscious affection forces to the cheek, she met him with a countenance bleached with anxiousness; instead of the unchecked smile that mingled urbanity and pleasure, and which perhaps speaks in the eye and every lineament as expressively and more touchingly than on the lip, the clouded brow mocked at the effort which would have decked her mouth in this harbinger of joy. The hand was indeed extended, but not the finger glowing with affection, and whose simple touch conveyed the feeling it meant to impart; it was not the convulsive grasp seeking to conquer the chill at the heart by the force of action; and if, for one minute, losing in his caresses the

the dread which had so engrossed every faculty, she indulged in renewed pleasure, it was exhibited in the tear which trembled in her eye, while her averted face betrayed a fear lest her doubts should be read and assimilated to the heart whose warmest resentment would have been elicited by an imagined possibility of its detection.

Things were in this train, when Edmund, one morning, contrary to his usual custom, informed her he should not be with her in the evening, as he must make a round of calls previous to his visit to London, whither he was called on particular business the beginning of the following week. Mocking all control, the tears of Elizabeth now could not be restrained; it was not alone grief at his quitting her, though that to her heart, incapable of any pleasure but what was connected with him, would have been sorrow sufficient; but it was

the

the embarrassment of his manner; and which brought conviction home to her that his affection was lost. Absorbed by grief, she thought of nothing but the anguish of the moment, till recovered by attentions from her lover, tender as those she had received in their sweetest hours of happiness. On his bosom she almost forgot that any cause for unhappiness existed, save that of a temporary absence from him who now constituted almost the whole of her earthly hope; and (terrible truth!) beyond earth she dared not hope—she dared scarcely think. Having promised, if possible, to see her again on the following evening, or at any rate the succeeding morning, previous to his journey, he took leave, and Elizabeth recurred to greater happiness than she had for some time experienced.

So true is it, that as our view of felicity decreases, our hopes strengthen; and the little that remains to us is cherished

rished with a pertinacity almost approaching to insanity, through every obstacle, and in defiance of reason.

Scarcely had he left the house ere captain Bennet appeared; unwilling to have the sweet sensations which again animated her bosom destroyed, she sent word out she was engaged. The girl returned with a slip of paper, on which was written.—"For Heaven's sake, let me see you for a moment some time today. H. B."—She returned an answer, that she should be at home in the evening.

Early in the evening captain Bennet arrived; he appeared pale and agitated, as Elizabeth demanded an explanation. He informed her that he had, two days before, arrived at B——; that on the preceding day he had met lady Worthing, and that sir George had passed, and he believed recognised, their persons; that lady Worthing

Worthing had immediately hurried from him, and he had not heard of her since. As Elizabeth could afford him no information, he soon quitted her; and the next day brought lady Worthing. The incident which had so much tormented her lover was scarcely referred to; she was unusually rational and pleasant; and had it not been for the expected visit of Edmund, Elizabeth would almost have enjoyed a day which brought her early life to her remembrance; for every topic which could bring unpleasant reflections was avoided.

Ere the tea-things were removed, captain Bennet arrived, but Elizabeth's short-lived tranquillity vanished, as the hour approached which usually brought Edmund to her; and so completely was she absorbed in reflection, that she did not observe lady Worthing had quitted the room, till captain Bennet advancing, begged her attention for a few minutes.

She

She looked up with very little interest, for she supposed it to be something relative to lady Worthing; but taking her hand, he begged her to fortify her mind for the reception of unpleasant intelligence. She looked at him, surprised rather than alarmed, for so little did she now deem it in the power of fortune to harm her, to so very small a circle were her hopes, views, and wishes comprised, that, independent of Edmund, she seemed almost to set its frowns at defiance; and of him, she felt assured, her companion had nothing to communicate; she therefore coolly awarded him her attention; and as he drew from his pocket a letter, she felt still less interested: but when, glancing at the superscription, she recognised her husband's writing, in an address to lady Worthing, a chill—a deadly chill, struck to her heart; but when, gathering courage from despair, she glanced over it, and imbibed rather than read its contents, so intensely was her interest excited,

cited, and when the conviction forced itself upon her, that her child was demanded, her frame refused any longer to support the shock her nerves had received; and losing all strength with her recollection, she sunk senseless in captain Bennet's arms.

When she recovered, she found herself in bed, and lady Worthing by the bedside; but so much were her intellects confused, that no distinct consciousness of what had passed remained. An indefinable sensation of despair, which hung heavily about her heart, and confused her brain, informed her something dreadful had occurred; and so unwilling was she to analyse the cause, that she eagerly accepted the laudanum which lady Worthing offered her, and gave herself up to the transient forgetfulness it inspired. But, with the morning, her recollection returned, and she immediately inquired for lady Worthing; she

was

was at breakfast, but soon appeared at the request of Elizabeth. She then begged a sight of the letter which captain Bennet had presented to her on the preceding evening; it was not in her possession; she had never seen it since he had taken it for her perusal.—"Lady Worthing," she cried, in a tone of anguish, "you cannot mean to enforce the authority that letter has given you."

"I cannot avoid it. I am made responsible for the welfare of the child."

"Responsible—my God! do you then doubt my care?"

"I am not the arbitrator."

"You do then mean to claim her?"

"I do."

"And have you then no fear that I shall resent this barbarity by revealing your secrets? Have a care, lady Worthing; remember that a worm, when trodden on, will turn."

"I do not fear your threats. I have your solemn promise that my secret is safe;

safe; and besides, how can you prove your assertions? the letters are directed to you."

Elizabeth had long felt the degradation to which vice had exposed her, but never so keenly as at this moment; her heart seemed bursting. Was this the felicity she had so fondly promised herself? The idea of parting from her Frances—she who had been her solace through so many hours of misery—this it was which gave the pang. Her maternal love had indeed been overshadowed by the preponderating influence of her fatal passion; it had never been weakened; and now that its indulgence could not afford a solace, it acted with all the influence it could assume upon a heart like that of Elizabeth's. For one moment the idea of flying to Dermont for protection—of imploring him to find her a retreat which lady Worthing could not penetrate, and where she might sometimes

sometimes see—sometimes hear from him, obtruded; but she shrunk from the idea of receiving pecuniary obligations from him; it would be giving a mercenary character to an attachment whose origin was pure, and would be assimilating her with a class in society between whom and herself she shuddered to confess a parallel might be drawn.

To part with the child was impossible—her brain maddened at the idea. She would—yes, she was equal to the task—her crime had been great, but her sacrifice would be yet greater; she would sacrifice Dermont—she would never see him again. Never see him again! she could not comprehend how that could be. Was it possible she could voluntarily give up him who had so long constituted her existence? it was not to be thought of—but then again her child. If Dermont *was* dearer to her heart, and she

did

did not deem that possible, her child was so assimilated to her mind, that while it retained its functions, her idea must live there; the one might break at the dereliction of her lover, but her reason must fall a sacrifice to her estrangement from her child.

Her resolution was taken—she would write to Dermont—she would tell him her determination. He could not condemn the feelings which actuated her, though she believed he might lament them. She would then dispose of all her valuables, remit to him the money she received from his hands, and with the rest seek some secluded spot till she could receive an answer from her husband, in which, after detailing her escape from his agent, she would implore him to have pity on her desolate situation, and grant her the guardianship of her child.

A whole day and night was given to the formation of this plan, and on the following morning she sat down to write her projected letter, when one was placed in her hands; it was Dermont's writing. Her fingers did not now tremble solely with joy as she broke the seal; but still there was enough of pleasure in the sensations to induce her to pause for the enjoyment of them ere she opened it; they were the last pleasurable emotions she felt from her attachment to him.

The letter was an abrupt farewell; it was visibly dictated by resentment, but there was yet a something which seemed like the lingering of tender sentiment. It proceeded to inform her, he was gone on a tour which might last many months, perhaps some years; but that he had settled on her child an annuity of a hundred a-year, payable to the mother till the decease of Frances; or

if

if the mother would not receive it, into the hands of Walter Darnley. The letter fell from her cold hands—the measure of her woes was completed. She could have resigned him; the heroism the sacrifice required would have been her support; but to be thrown from him without even an expression of regret, of pity for her situation, or of sympathy in her sufferings, was *too—too* much!

She was seated upright in her chair, her eyes fixed on vacancy, the letter laying at her feet, when her little girl found her. Missing the smiling caresses which usually greeted her, she proceeded to take the hand which dropped lifeless at her side; but its touch was so cold, that the child, affrighted, called to Sally.

Sally appeared, but with less of feeling than her young "missus;" she had as much of vulgar helplessness, and for

 some

some moments stood gazing on her in stupid surprise; and then running screaming to the next cottage, brought the good dame, who was nursing a sick woman, to "look at her missus, who was just like a corpses."

"Your mistress! what, Mrs. Beverly?" exclaimed a voice from behind a curtain, drawn to exclude the light from the sick person; at the same moment, a figure emerging from its shade, discovered Walter Darnley.

He accompanied the nurse; but when he saw the countenance whose animated and expressive play had so often attracted his regards now lost, pale and unvarying as the chiselled sculpture, his courage failed, his step faltered, his eye moistened, and his lip quivered. A moment he paused at the door—a mental prayer had being in his heart, was communicated through his eyes, and he was strengthened.—"Elizabeth!"

he

he ejaculated, as he approached her; but she heard him not—she saw him not, though the pang which rent his heart, as he witnessed her sufferings, was only inferior to hers, as the feeling of conscious innocence in his bosom heightened it—as the sense of moral degradation made hers more intolerable.

It was near the hour when the surgeon visited Mrs. Wyat; Walter only waited to secure the latter from the prying eyes of strangers, and again caught a lingering view of Elizabeth, ere he ran to detain him, while he ordered her female attendant to convey her to bed. But what "medicine can minister to a mind diseased?"

When animation was restored to her—when she was pronounced convalescent, she was no longer the being who spoke but to command attention—who but moved to attract admiration, and whose

language and countenance alike united beauty and expression. Her eye was indeed no longer fixed on vacancy, but it fell with rayless lustre on every object within its vision. The ever-varying blush, which constituted so much of the charm of her countenance, was quite lost, and her colourless lip had entirely forgotten its smile. Nothing attracted—nothing interested her; she once indeed inquired for her child; and when told it was with lady Worthing, she repeated, "Lady Worthing!" without accent or animation, and relapsed again into silence. A cold monosyllable was all she could be prevailed on to utter, and this was given apparently accidentally, for she seemed alike unconscious a moment after that she had assented to the request of her friends.

Walter had, on the first appearance of amendment, rode over to request to be allowed to take back the little Frances; quite

quite unconscious of the authority under which lady Worthing acted. She answered by placing the letter which had been shewn Elizabeth in his hands. Surprise and indignation were so legibly written on his countenance, that he needed not have applied the epithets with which he loaded the name of major Beverly, to have given his fair companion a picture of his mind.

Delighted at the opportunity thus offered, lady Worthing eagerly availed herself of it to utter all the sad events with which she was acquainted, not, however, in a circumstantial narrative, but in sorrow and grief, and hope and fear—a love of justice even towards such a man as major Beverly. But her part was overstrained; had she given, with Elizabeth's unfortunate story, any palliative circumstance, Walter might have believed it was possible she could so have erred; but in the disguise which lady

Worthing planned, he could distinguish nothing of the candid, feeling, and sensible girl he had so much loved. He only answered by desiring major Beverly's address; and finding it useless to endeavour to persuade her to relinquish the child, took his leave, heartily disgusted with the woman, so nearly connected with an unfortunate, who could delight to lessen her in the eyes of her friends.

CHAP-

CHAPTER VIII.

THOUGH Dermont, in connexion with Elizabeth, has occupied a considerable portion of these pages, yet his history is unknown, his character not defined, and his conduct labouring under such inconsistencies, as must lessen the interest we wish to create in his favour; for Elizabeth's aberrations can certainly only claim the tear of pity, from a consideration of the magnitude of the temptations she had to error.

Edmund Dermont was the only son of a country gentleman of small fortune, but good family, who having been bred to the bar, and pushed into life by the aid of connexions, imprudently forfeited the patronage which would have effected

his elevation, by a marriage with a female who had only beauty and art to recommend her. She died in giving birth to a daughter the third year after her marriage; but she had lived long enough to convince Mr. Dermont, that the happiness he had sought in this connexion was better in perspective than in possession. But being a man of strong passions and inveterate prejudices, her character left an impression unfavourable to females in general.

His own daughter was consigned to a maiden aunt, that she might escape the inundation of modern female accomplishments, which now formed almost the whole vocabulary of the "female academicians;" she, in reality, occupied but few of his reflections, and yet less of his tenderness, which was lavished on his son Edmund. Great talents were either discovered in him, or parental affection gave that turn to commonplace ability; but

but the boy being quickly given to understand that his qualifications were very superior, gladly availed himself of this supposed pre-eminence to escape the elementary drudgery to which common minds were subjected. Every whim, resulting from over-indulgence, being, by his fond father, considered as a proof of that eccentricity so usually the concomitant of genius, he hailed with rapture; and he therefore immediately, adopting the wild theory which has been given to the world as Rousseau's system, determined that his son should be left to perfect the organs through which instruction is received, before they were loaded with the stores which science has exhibited to her followers. The effects may be imagined; the youth had accidentally acquired the first principles of reading and writing; but as habits of idleness were deeply rooted in his mind, which all the attention on the part of his tutors could not afterwards counteract,

teract, no entreaties could prevail on him to go through a regular course of study; but every new publication was seized with avidity, and most of them quitted with disgust ere half read. The poet, the historian, the philosopher, and the novelist, possessed by turns his wavering fancy, and were then all thrown by, to go in pursuit of the external accomplishments of music, dancing, and drawing; and being gifted with a peculiar quickness of comprehension and native delicacy of taste, the rapid progress he made in them was astonishing.

An enthusiastic admirer of nature, he sought her through all her gradations, and to female beauty he surrendered himself a willing captive; and, at the early age of seventeen, his father detected him in a clandestine correspondence with a female, whose conduct had been marked with so much levity previous to her acquaintance with him, as must

must have reflected eternal disgrace on any connexion she had formed: though the slave of his passions, his mind was susceptible of the most romantic notions of honour; it therefore required but little persuasion to induce him to relinquish a connexion which he was now convinced must be an improper one; but his word was already pledged never to marry another, but with the consent of her he now left, while she remained single, and he could not refuse, to her urgent request, to bury the whole affair in oblivion.

It was just after this affair that his mind received more assistance than it had ever hitherto done. Drawn to his father by united affection and gratitude, he devoted his time to him; and as the elder Mr. Dermont was an elegant scholar, he reaped considerable benefit from the communion. It was at this time that he saved Elizabeth from the water; but

but recently saved from an adventure which had consigned him to a long celibacy, he attended so little to the person of her he had rescued, or her person had not all the beauties which might rival Amphitrite, however beautiful it might be, after civil inquiries respecting her health, he thought no more of Elizabeth, till the night of the ball, when his eye first caught her expressive glance of pleasure, and the blush of rapture which kindled on her cheek. Had she been merely beautiful, he would have avoided her, for, aware of his failing, he would have flown from the danger; but new to the expression of sensibility—of gratitude, he gave himself entirely up to the sentiment they inspired,—which called forth every sympathy in his nature, and which called forth emotions new as they were delightful. In his first attachment he had viewed the woman he loved as a beautiful toy—a plaything—a brilliant bauble; in Elizabeth he

hailed

hailed a companion irresistibly alluring, a brilliant instructress, and an invaluable friend; yet he soon learned to distrust the reasoning which had lulled him into a fancied security, and calling to mind his engagements, determined to shun so dangerous, so fascinating a creature; but every resolution was weakened by every repeated interview, and he began to consider if an accommodation could not be effected with his first mistress. His father readily undertook the negociation, but conjured him, as he valued his blessing, not to fetter the sweet Elizabeth with any promise, real or implied.

To his sister she had proved a powerful rival. This lady Worthing soon perceived, and by blowing the spark of envy to a flame, secured to herself a coadjutor in her schemes. In Dermont this false and cruel sister-in-law beheld a young man, who, though wanting titles and riches, was so eminently gifted with

with such personal attractions, and such insinuating manners, that even her vanity could not conceal, that the admiration, united, they would command, would completely throw her in the background. Their union must therefore be prevented, and Dermont's inconsistent conduct promoted her scheme. To Miss Dermont every girlish error was detailed, with such additions and equivocations as were necessary to the perfection of her plan; her lively, vivacious temper was distorted into coquetry, and the innocent playfulness of her manner, to a prejudiced eye, gave but too much appearance of truth to the charge. Once deceived, he had learned to distrust the whole sex, and with the greatest eagerness he anticipated her visit to his sister, determined then to scrutinize a conduct in which he feared there was much to condemn.

This resolution gave to his manner that

that gravity, and his father's wishes, enforced by his presence, repressed every affectionate attention; but if in society he had been fascinated by the brilliancy of her talents, the gracefulness of her manner, and the beauty of her person, his judgment approved, his heart felt, that amiable watchfulness, unobtrusive generosity, and solidity of character, which rendered her so delightful a fire-side companion: but his sister's hints, that Elizabeth understood his character, and played her part accordingly, kept him to the resolution he had taken. But the unfortunate light in which she had regarded his conduct, by awakening the dormant pride and resentment which was so predominant a feature in her character, gave to her conduct precisely the character he feared it would assume.

His sister did not fail to point this out to him; but so strong was the bias his mind had received in her favour, that

that he sent to Bendish Hall, in the hope of finding her restored to that sober dignity of character he had so much admired. His heart sunk as he heard the sneers of the Misses Bendish, but there was so much of envy evident in their manner, that he hoped it was only through that medium she could be condemned; it is therefore impossible to describe his feelings when he discovered captain Prince at her feet, holding her hand. The shock he had felt at the depravity of his first love could not be compared to it. Hers was the empire of beauty alone, but in Elizabeth he loved all that was beautiful in the mind, lovely in feeling, or captivating in the manner.

He sought her no more, he saw her no more, 'till the visit which preceded the marriage of Lucinda Beverly was made; and then the soft dejection of her manner, by reviving the impression she had

had made during her visit to his sister, brought back to his heart all the wishes he had ever cherished—all the views his heart had so fondly planned; but his father had failed in the accommodation he had proposed, and after the ball he had ceased to urge one, for he could not entrust his happiness to the caprices of a coquette; but in her the simple play of nature again triumphed, again he was determined to believe her good, and on his return to his father, he made her the visit which has been recorded.

It was his anxiety which gave to his air that languor in which Elizabeth had so much sympathized. From the Linleys he had constantly heard of Elizabeth after the death of her father, and to his sister he had entrusted a letter, expressive of his deep interest in her welfare, and though not containing a formal offer, it betrayed enough of his heart to have kept her from the idea of any other

other connexion; but this letter she never received. Miss Linley had given it to lady Worthing, who read and then burnt it.

The accommodation his father had planned was at length effected, and on the wings of love and hope, he flew to the Lodge. Elizabeth had walked out; she was at the dell; he followed her, and meeting lady Worthing, eagerly inquired for her sister.

"She is so pleasantly engaged, that I could not but deem myself an intruder; but I am impatient to return—if you please, we will seek her."

"Pleasantly engaged! is she not then alone?"

"Oh no! captain Bennet is her companion."

Poor Dermont was fated to be the victim to appearances: Bennet was at the

the feet of Elizabeth. Lady Worthing and her companion were unobserved. By a motion of his hand he made her comprehend he wished to speak to her. Nothing could be more agreeable to her than this proposition. To Dermont's passionate inquiries she gave such answers as, without committing herself, were calculated to strengthen his worst suspicions. He begged his visit might be concealed from her who was the object of it, and returned without having seen her; and yet so much of passion lingered in his bosom, that he determined to see her again, to reproach her with her dissimulation, and then fly her for ever. To this purpose he sought her at sir George Worthing's; she had walked out; he saw her enter the first office; captain Bennet joined her, and he again fled.

But though he avoided her society, her image followed him everywhere; and

and when he heard of her marriage with major Beverly, consternation, rather than amazement, was the feeling which assailed him. Captain Bennet was rejected—captain Prince was rejected; it was impossible she could love Beverly; who then did she love? The contrary passions this question aroused in his bosom, by constantly recalling her to his mind, prevented his conquering a passion, now hopeless as it was violent. In vain he plunged into the most maddening excesses; he found faces as beautiful, forms as perfect, manners as fascinating, and love as imposing: but the ardent sensibility, the warm, yet chaste colouring of her ideas, the brilliant fancy, the cultivated mind, and that heart so tender, yet so exclusively his own (for this conviction now flashed upon him), where could he find? Yet he sought her not; for it was that virtue, that strength of mind, that rectitude of principle, she now so beautifully displayed, which gave weight

weight to all her other captivations. No, she must ever be loved by him; but he would never seek to recall himself to her memory, nor share the tranquillity she was enjoying; and when he heard of the unfortunate change in her circumstances, he could not restrain the feeling which prompted him to seek in Bath an interview to offer his services, and to fly her for ever. She was in London, but his meeting Bertram at the jeweller's, enabled him to fulfil the purport of his visit.

When the Lodge was offered for sale, he eagerly availed himself of the circumstance to become its purchaser, and understanding that the cottage his bailiff wished to appropriate to himself was in the possession of a widow woman, he desired that a room in another situation might be offered to her; and the first leisure opportunity he walked down towards the cottage, in order to assist the widow,

widow, if he found her deserving and an object of charity. In his way he was attracted by his dog to the side of the pond, in the manner we have related; but who can describe his surprise to discover, in this supposed widow, the beloved of his heart? Her own emotions prevented her from discovering those of Edmund, who retired to ruminate on the circumstances which had again thrown her in his path.

Satisfied with having seen her in the power of friends, he had made a point not even to inquire where she had gone to after leaving the Darnleys; but could he slight the opportunity thus offered him of seeing her sometimes, with the consciousness of having obliged her in a way her affectionate heart would consider the most gratifying?

When Walter Darnley called in the afternoon, it may readily be supposed

he

he had no difficulty in gaining his cause; but Mr. Dermont earnestly begged that she might not know him as the proprietor of the cottage; and now, while every morning opened with a resolution to avoid the cottage, no evening closed without his having passed a portion of the day with its dangerous inhabitant. It was not that he feared for her virtue or his own, but he well knew the world would not give to such a connexion the interpretation which charity might with truth have surmised. Her misfortunes, her candour, her deserted situation, and, above all, her reliance on his honour, were her safeguard.

At length her unfortunate visit to lady Worthing was planned; accident, combined with this circumstance, carried him into this society more frequently than he had ever hitherto met it. Association of ideas carried him back to the meeting at the dell, where

 he

he had discovered Elizabeth's encouragement of captain Bennet.

Lady Worthing soon saw this, and took her advantage of it. The first time Dermont joined them in their walk with captain Bennet, lady Worthing had a conversation prepared; it sunk deep into his mind. *If* Elizabeth was not a coquette, she must be even worse. *If* Bennet was not dear to her, why did she suffer him to meet her, in defiance of delicacy, of friendship, and of propriety? Lady Worthing did not propose these queries, but in her conversation the ideas which gave rise to them originated. Dermont lost that enthusiastic respect which had assimilated Elizabeth's idea with that of a superior order of beings; and let it be remembered, that his habits, previous to his last acquaintance with Elizabeth, were such as to impress on his mind an unfavourable opinion of the sex.

His

His love for Elizabeth had hitherto been too enthusiastic to merit the epithet of passion; to see her—to converse with her—to behold her happy—and to believe he increased her happiness, was all he desired; but now that her mysterious connexion with Bennet embarrassed him, all his former suspicions returned; and though he never really believed in the ideas he cherished, they were of sufficient weight to change the current of his thoughts. Her manner too was changed; instead of that guarded dignity which he feared to offend, the most bewitching softness appeared; it made him forget that she was a wife and a mother.

Intoxicated with love for a time, her dereliction from virtue drew her yet nearer to his heart; she had for him resigned the world—he was the happiest of mortals; but as his former doubts returned, he recollected the sudden change in

 her

her manner which took place immediately on her return to the cottage.

By a strange association of ideas, he thought at the same time of the tone of affright in which lady Worthing had spoken, when he had said something of their being so much together. Surely, the world does not already talk of their connexion; and then an overstrained attempt to qualify her words left him awake to the most dreadful surmises; but the generosity of his nature made him check them as they arose. Elizabeth a practised dissembler! impossible! and to make amends for the momentary wrong he had done her, his manner, at their next interview, was more affectionate than ever. But his suspicions gained ground; the alteration in Elizabeth's manner seemed to his prejudiced mind a confirmation of all his surmises; that was the expression of her feelings; the other was the disguise. At length, tired

of

of this disguise, he determined to shake off suspicions so disgraceful to himself and to her. Yes! he would confess his fault and seek a pardon, when he received an anonymous letter, stating, that if he went to the cottage in the morning, instead of the evening, he would be convinced that the attachment of the fair inhabitant was not quite so ardent as it appeared. It was right, he thought, though he despised anonymous information, to avail himself of the hint, for his future satisfaction; besides, he had letters which called him to London, and he had better defer the explanation till his return. He announced his journey to Elizabeth. Her artless grief restored to her every sentiment of tenderness he had ever felt for her, and he quitted her more fondly attached than ever. But as he quitted the house, he met captain Bennet; his sight electrified him, and he scarcely recovered his recollection sufficiently to return the

 compliments

compliments of the morning. His first impulse was to delay his visit, and suddenly in the evening make his appearance. But an instant served to dissipate so wild a thought. No, he would trust to the observations he had himself made on her conduct; she might be coquettish, but she could not be so base as to lavish on another the caresses—the endearments, he had so often known; he could not believe her faultless, but that she loved him he could not doubt. He pursued his round of visits, but in spite of himself, the idea of captain Bennet would obtrude.

Lady Worthing, who had reason to surmise the occasion of his want of spirits (for she it was who wrote the anonymous letter) did not fail to take advantage of this frame of mind. He at length determined on a step which he ought to have decided on long before. He would unfold to Elizabeth all

the

the doubts which agitated his bosom; he would desire of her an explanation of those parts of her conduct which seemed to him so mysterious. He dreaded the shock her sensibility would feel at his suspicions, for he knew the self-reproach they would excite; but he owed it to her—he owed it to himself. Immediately, therefore, on his return, he sought the cottage. Lady Worthing had foreseen this, and was there to receive him. Having excited new suspicions, and having strengthened them by exacting a solemn promise that he would not seek, by a personal rencontre with captain Bennet, to revenge the injury he had done him, she shewed to him the two little billets which had passed on the preceding day between captain Bennet and Elizabeth, adding, they were now together. She insensibly led him towards the windows of the room in which Elizabeth was placed, as she informed Dermont she

had accepted the office of watching for his arrival, which she only agreed to, in the hope that his arguments would induce Elizabeth to break off a connexion so disgraceful.

Dermont heard no more; Elizabeth was in the arms of Bennet; he turned abruptly from lady Worthing, mounted his horse, and, late as it was, pursued his journey to London.

CHAP-

CHAPTER IX.

The noble mind is ever prone to trust;
Yet love, with fond anxiety, is join'd;
And timid tenderness is oft unjust;
The coldness which it dreads, too prompt to find,
And torture the too-susceptible mind.
Hence rose the gloom. PSYCHE.

IN the last few months of Elizabeth's life, her hopes, fears, views, and wishes, have been so entirely selfish, that even her best friends have not been allowed to participate in them. Being unacquainted with the emotions which agitated her mind, with the guilty passion which reigned in her heart, and triumphed over every better feeling, Matilda Darnley often, in the exercise of her duties, or in the participation of pleasure, gave a sigh to her early associate; and a packet

packet was never sent to Elmwell without a letter for Elizabeth, with a book for the child, a new and interesting poem for Elizabeth, or some memorial of her affection, which, at the same time that it endeared her kindness, contributed to the amusement or comfort of her for whom it was designed.

To the intelligence which the last conveyed, or to the present it contained, our heroine was alike insensible, and incapable of participating in the pleasure of the rest of her friends, at the rational prospect of happiness, held out in her union with Mr. Betham. She had not thrown away the many opportunities offered her of judging of the character of her betrothed husband; and every survey that added certainty to conviction of its worth. As he had now obtained a lucrative situation in the —— office, their residence was fixed in London; and almost the only source of regret

gret she knew for some weeks, was the close attention he was compelled to give to the duties of his situation, and which necessarily abridged her enjoyment of his society.

As his hours of attendance were regular, however mortifying this circumstance, she had too much philosophy to be ruffled by a circumstance which was in itself irremediable; but a trial of another nature awaited, and one which it demanded all her energy of character to support, for she now saw her husband only at the hours appropriated to eating, and then he seemed lost in thought, and so absent, that he sometimes barely rendered her those attentions common civility demanded. She endeavoured to persuade herself business of an unpleasant nature engrossed his thoughts; but her reason would not allow of the self-deception. She however possessed sufficient self-command to disguise the cha-

grin this apparent indifference excited, and every attention which the most unfeigned affection could suggest was lavished on him; he rather accepted than returned her caresses; but as her conduct was the effect of principle, and not of feeling exclusively, her assiduities were not withdrawn.

She had one morning ordered her carriage to Kensington, determined on spending a few hours with her brother, who had lodgings there; but had stopped at her milliner's in Bond-street, to make some purchases. She had selected a piece of Mechlin lace, and had taken it to the window to examine it more narrowly, when her attention was called from her purchase by Mrs. Fripping, who exclaimed, but in a tone which proclaimed speaking thought, rather than a wish to enter into a conversation —"Ah, poor thing! I am glad to see you cry; but I am afraid you must be lost."

Matilda

Matilda turned towards her, to inquire the meaning of her expression; but before she could ask one, her eyes were arrested by a sight which took from her the power of speech. In the opposite window stood a female, whose form was interesting, from the extreme of youthful loveliness, rather than for its finished beauty or elegance; her face was hidden in a handkerchief; but there was in her manner a voluptuous ease, which seemed to speak a consciousness of superior beauty. Opposite to her stood a gentleman, who appeared earnestly talking to her; he had hold of one of her hands, while his other arm enfolded a beautiful child, apparently about a year and a half old, and who appeared to have climbed on a stool to attract his attention. At the moment Matilda glanced towards them, the gentleman led the female from the window; but, for a moment, Matilda had no power to move, for in the gentleman she discovered her husband.

There

There was something in the tone of her companion, which seemed to imply even more than she had uttered. Matilda deliberated if she should ask an explanation. Her heart ached—ached to learn some particulars, by which she might be enabled to form a correct judgment of the scene she had just witnessed; but to the first emotions of her heart she had learned to distrust. Ere, however, she could call her reflective powers into action sufficiently to decide, her hostess, who observed her glance of inquiry, continued—"Is she not beautiful, madam? and so young as she looks, who could have supposed she had been in keeping more than two years? They said the gentleman was very fond of her; but growing tired, is either married, or going to be married, and he therefore wishes her to go into the country; but she is devoted to the pleasures of London, and has just had very fine offers from a great man to sit at the head of

his

his table; and so I don't know how it will be: but, good Heavens, madam, you seem faint!"

"Oh no! I am very well," cried Matilda, immediately recovering her self-possession, "but wish immediately to return," for she feared her husband might see her carriage at the door, and so find out the discovery she had made, and with which she did not by any means desire he should be acquainted.

The hours till dinner (for Matilda gave up her visit to her brother) were devoted to reflection and to prayer. Could she have even been assured of her husband's infidelity, the task would have been far less difficult than she now found it; but though every sense seemed to give evidence of his guilt, her reason spoke in vindication of his innocence, for it had followed him with the most watchful care, and had not discovered in him one trait which could either mark the seducer

of

of innocence, or the subtile deceiver, both of which, if she was to judge from the scène just exhibited, and her milliner's conversation, she must believe him. But what if he was guilty? did that lessen his claims on her? he was her husband in the sight of God, by whom her plighted vows were witnessed, and who was solemnly called upon to ratify, and make holy, the compact; she had vowed obedience and love to him, nor could any act of his exonerate her from her promise.

This life was meant as a trial of virtue; it was not sufficient that she submitted outwardly; she must teach her mind to rise superior to all worldly sorrow. Matilda did not therefore exhibit the interesting spectacle of a frame drooping under the grief which fastened on her heart—that heart, which was taught to believe, those "whom God loveth he chasteneth," found in this declaration

claration encouragement to aim at the perfection we are taught to consider as unattainable here. No sigh, no tear, therefore, at dinner, announced to Mr. Betham that she had any cause for sorrow—no absence of manner, that any extraordinary occasion for reflection dwelt on her mind; much less did any little pettishness or scornful glance betray the indignation of a jealous mind, or wounded pride.

But her heart had yet another pang to encounter—yet another trial to sustain. She had one morning ordered her carriage for a ride into the city, when one of the wheels was found to be unsafe; her ride could not be delayed, for it was to make some purchases for Mr. Betham, who had that morning officially been called to a seaport at some distance, where, as his stay was uncertain, and his time would be completely absorbed in business, he would not allow her to accompany

company him; she therefore desired a coach might be called, and proceeded on her excursion. She was absorbed in reflection, till an infantine scream aroused her attention, and hurrying towards it, discovered a child, in a vehicle similar to her own, had thrust its hand through the glass. As the coach immediately stopped, they passed it; and throwing herself forward to discover if the child had sustained any injury, she distrusted the evidence of her senses, when she saw, in the occupiers of the carriage, Mr. Betham, with the female she had known as his companion in Bond-street; and as the unknown threw back her veil to render some assistance to the child, her surprise was changed to horror, in recognising Frances Beverly.

The conviction of her husband's baseness was now forced upon her, for being from Elmwell at the time of Mr. Betham's romantic excursion, she was entirely

tirely unacquainted with his former passion for her friend; and the embarrassment he had shewn at the mention of their name, and his evident uneasiness when they were the subject of conversation, were now attributed to so many proofs of his guilt—the strange disappearance of Frances—all united to force conviction on her.

Amongst the very few men of the world who were admitted to visit at her house was captain Prince. A variety of circumstances contributed to render this admission indispensable; for though Elizabeth, in delicacy to major Beverly, had not given to his conduct the colouring which suited the extent of his guilt, yet her friend had learned enough to know him a libertine; but there was about him a careless good humour, a thoughtless generosity, which to those less solicitous in the cause of virtue would have been a passport to favour.

After

After his failure with Elizabeth, captain Prince had not, in weaving himself a willow garland, forsworn the sex; on the contrary, his talents for intrigue had been employed on an object scarcely less desirable than the one he had lost, in which he had been foiled by Mr. Betham, who having afterwards avoided a duel, in a manner which alike reflected credit on his head and his heart, his bosom harboured a plan of revenge, which was worthy of a demon to execute; and as he was assured that Mrs. Betham was ignorant of her husband's interference in the affair to which we have been alluding, he determined to interweave that story with his assiduities, and did not doubt but he should be successful; for from Elizabeth's repulse of him, he had gathered caution, and a knowledge of the delicacies necessary to be practised when the seduction of *virtue* is the object.

We

We will not follow him through all the windings of his plot, which was begun soon after the marriage of Matilda. Soon after her first discovery of Frances in Bond-street, he had hinted at her husband's having formed an attachment; but he touched upon it in so artful a manner, that Matilda could only repulse his information, without expressing her indignation at his interference; but having witnessed the rencontre in the city, and she having observed that he saw her, it gave him courage at their next interview (for Matilda had engaged to spend the term of Mr. Betham's absence, at his request, with lady Bazing, her particular friend, and a relation to captain Prince), in referring to this, to touch on his own passion; yet as this was done in a manner which his looks only could construe into a declaration improper for her, so she chose not to put that interpretation upon it, and rather trusted to her future conduct, to repel assiduities

at

at once hateful to her principles, and wounding to her delicacy, than, by open resentment, to shew that he had entirely forfeited her good opinion, and therefore induce him to throw off all restraint. But oh! how changed was every prospect! She dared not acquaint her husband, who ought to be the guardian of her honour, of her situation; for now that she had discovered him a libertine, she feared he might disclose himself a duellist also, and she must be compelled to his daily presence, for she could not leave lady Bazing without betraying her secret.

CHAP-

CHAPTER X.



So mourns th' imprisoned lark his hapless fate,
In love's soft season ravish'd from his mate;
Fondly fatigues his unavailing rage,
And hops and flutters round and round his cage;
And moans and droops, with pining grief oppress'd,
While sweet complainings warble from his breast.

FITZGERALD.

I am not mad—I would to Heaven I were!
For then, 'tis like, I should forget myself:
Oh, if could, what grief should I forget!

SHAKESPEARE.

WE left Walter Darnley condemning the unsisterly conduct of lady Worthing towards the poor Elizabeth; we left him also under the conviction that what she had advanced must be untrue; yet, pure and noble as was his nature, he could

could not imagine that the story was entirely the fabrication of her brain. That Mr. Dermont had once loved Elizabeth, he well knew; and that Elizabeth had returned his passion, he had every reason to believe; it therefore could not surprise him, that Dermont, having loved and being beloved, could not forget a passion, even though its attainment was now hopeless. That Elizabeth had so far forgotten her marriage vows, and every principle of virtue, in the indulgence of a love so highly criminal, he would not, for one moment, allow himself to suppose; but that she had suffered her ardent mind to receive attentions which she ought to have checked, several circumstances induced him to believe; yet he could find excuses for that conduct in another which he would have held highly criminal in himself. Was not hers a heart formed to love? and had not he she loved thrown her from him? But to excuse

and

and to approve are two distinct sentiments, and he sighed as he found the utmost exertion of his candour was necessary. But could he leave this fascinating creature to languish out her life in the care of a mercenary and ignorant country attendant? Could he suffer that fine mind, whose exertions—whose enthusiasm, had so often contributed to his delight, to wear itself out without one friend to watch the first dawn of reason, and assist its progress? it was impossible! but who could—who would be the tender friend, of whom she stood so much in need? Ah! could the suffrages of society, the rules of delicacy, permit his attendance, how gladly would he undertake the office! but his sister Beatrice alone was acquainted with the attachment which yet lingered in his bosom. Elizabeth was to her as a sister, and at the first indication of his desire, she would, he well knew, offer herself to undertake a task so difficult.

 But

But Beatrice knew nothing of the tale he had that day heard—she knew nothing of what his observation had led him to imagine; with the first she must be made acquainted; with the latter he unconsciously added so many palliatives—so many doubts—so many hopes, and so much admiration, that what he felt was materially in her disfavour, to Beatrice appeared goodness.

As Walter firmly believed lady Worthing had, by some gross misstatement, obtained the order for the detention of the child, he intended immediately to write to major Beverly, stating the shock the health and nerves of his wife had sustained by this unwarrantable exertion of his authority; that she was now under his roof, and that he begged, in unison with Elizabeth, to be appointed the guardian of his child; and, as he thought a little finesse with such a woman as lady Worthing allowable, he

took

took her this letter, having left a blank side for her use, in case she had any thing to communicate.

She affected the greatest surprise at its contents. Had she entertained the slightest idea that the affair in question would have been made of the importance Mr. Darnley seemed to consider it, she never would have insisted on its exertion; but to her it appeared that *poor Mrs. Beverly* had been quite glad to rid herself of what must be a great source of anxiety; but as Mr. Darnley had offered to become responsible for the child, she must acknowledge herself too happy to be acquitted of the task, for she was the most ignorant, the most troublesome, and the most stupid child she had ever seen.

The little Frances, therefore, with her mother, were again inmates of the parsonage; the former all delight at the

 change,

change, the latter quite insensible to it—entirely insensible to the caresses of her child, who, climbing into her lap, would cry—"Poor, poor mamma, isn't you well, mamma? I will kiss you, and make you well;" and then, as her caresses were quite disregarded, would burst into tears, run to Beatrice or Walter, and say they should be mamma now.

A month had passed in this way; they sometimes flattered themselves that, as the prattle of the child grew more lively, its sound, sometimes by striking on the ear of Elizabeth, created something like attention; but their hopes had only sunk into yet deeper despondency, from their trial of her perception, by taking the child immediately to her, having failed.

At this time a letter from Mr. Betham excited a deep and lasting interest in the bosoms of the brother and sister;

after

after inquiring minutely into the present situation of Elizabeth, it proceeded to state that Frances was found; but to suspend their joy at this discovery, as it would be tinctured with the deepest remorse at hearing, that it was under their brother Frederick's protection she had placed herself when she had left her suffering sister; that Frederick's approaching marriage had suggested the necessity of parting from her; and that he had cautiously broken to her the intelligence; but that, at the first intimation of such a step, her grief knew no bounds, it preyed on her spirits and undermined her health, till captain Prince, having been accidentally again thrown in her way, had become so enchanted with her beauty, that he became her professed lover, and prosecuted his suit with so much ardour, that to be relieved from solicitation, and the dread of thinking and acting for herself, and to drive away the melancholy ideas the desertion

of Frederick, imparted, she seemed to listen to his protestations, and to be gratified by attentions which soothed her wounded mind. This was the situation of affairs when Mr. Betham became acquainted with her affairs; his expostulations, his representations, were not thrown away; she consented to retire upon the annuity Frederick had appropriated to her; and Mr. Betham wrote, that her situation, views, and wishes, might be communicated to Elizabeth: he added, that his wife's situation had prevented his making her acquainted with this melancholy story, as he was convinced that she would suffer the most complicated distress in dwelling on the faults of her brother, and the fate of the young and beautiful Frances.

The answer sent to this letter may be anticipated; as their attentions to Elizabeth were neither the effect of romance or ostentation, she would again be taken home;

home; and in her care and assiduities they judged that Frances would be alike happy to evince her repentance and sense of her hapless sister's former kindness; but this subject furnished them with much conversation, which they freely discussed before Elizabeth; and they were surprised and delighted to find it evidently attracted her attention.—"Frances!" she exclaimed, and her eyes shot forth a ray of intellectual brightness, which, though faint and powerless, gave evidence of what had been their expression; she then sunk again into her former apathy. But at night, when the child was brought to press her colourless cheek with its ruby lips, her eye again, for a moment, resumed its expression, and—"Frances!" she exclaimed, as her eye met the gaze of her child. Her hand now approached her forehead, which she rubbed, apparently in deep thought, but immediately sunk into her habitual gloom.

She was yet seated on the sofa—all had left her but Walter and his sister; her hand was extended by her side—he perceived a tear—he carried it to his lips—she shudderingly withdrew it.—"No, no," she cried, "that is guilt, and 'twas guilt that took my child away!" She wept for a moment, and then sunk again into a tranquil and natural sleep.

Beatrice did not quit her; Walter spent some hours in prayer; and when he joined his sister in the morning, Elizabeth was yet asleep on the sofa; but she awoke with the same vacant look which was so terrible; yet when the child was again brought to her, her eyes filled with tears; but she neither met nor receded from the kiss she imprinted on her mother's cheek.

Beatrice was much gratified with the next letter she received from Mr. Betham; it informed her that Mrs. Bertram

tram had agreed to accompany Frances to her sister; and as the income of Frances, in addition to that for which Walter was trustee in behalf of Elizabeth's child, would allow of their keeping two servants, he had eagerly availed himself of her offer.

Another month again brought Elizabeth to the cottage; the sight of her child had now ceased exclusively to give to her countenance that faint ray of intelligence they had so fondly hailed; but it never appeared in her absence, and her idea was visibly connected with the name of Frances, for if she evinced, at this sound, any recollection at all, her eye glanced towards the child. Their fears were awakened to the consequences of her first interview with her sister—that sister so beloved, for whom she had sacrificed so much, and in whose uncertain destiny so many tears had been shed; and yet their hopes, even here,

 predominated,

predominated, nor were they disappointed.

Frances, who had borne her journey with much composure, started as she was entering the cottage, and her tears began to flow; but when she was shewn into her sister's apartment—when she beheld that countenance which, without the aid of words, discovered every emotion which throbbed at her heart, deprived not only of animation, but expression—when she beheld that cheek, where the rose had once beautifully bloomed, and where, when the rose was withered, the ever-changing colour gave evidence of the transition of feeling, now cold, sunken, and inanimate, as the clay to which its appearance seemed to indicate she was hastening, every faculty was overpowered, and she sunk senseless on the floor; but at her next interview she approached her sister, she kissed her forehead, and, with the sweetest

tones

tones of her soft voice, pronounced her name; life, not colour, now appeared on her countenance—her finger was raised—"Hark!" But her hand again dropped lifeless by her side—animation was again lost, and she sunk back to despondency.

But when Frances, taking her sister's child in her arms, sang to it the airs to which Elizabeth, in her hours of youth, had listened, they called her imagination into play; though her reason was absent, she was again, in idea, the gay blooming girl, whose gaiety was the life of their rustic sports. Her child was her sister Frances—but again she would rave of a prison—would, shrieking, fall on her knees, and implore captain Prince to save her child—then again accuse him of taking her sister from her. Sometimes, but not often, the name of "Edmund" would pass her lips; but then with both her hands she would

cover her face; and heavy sighs, and burning tears, gave evidence, that on this subject something like reason was yet awake.

The unremitting attention of Beatrice to improve these dawnings of resumed intelligence, the soothings of Frances, and the caresses of her child, now made her reasonable intervals longer, and seemed to curb the wild expressions of agony which were so distressing to her friends. Yet still the dominion of fancy over reason was ever apparent; and if circumstances led to reflection, it was always followed by long intervals of suspended reason.

To amuse her mind, and to captivate her attentions, light poetry, with the aid of music, was sometimes sought. Frances was singing from a book they had together transcribed in happier days (Elizabeth, reclining behind her

her on a sofa, was looking over her shoulder) a mad song, which from the wild, yet melodious symphony that accompanied it, and for its own sweet air, had been a great favourite. Frances hastily turned to the next leaf; and as her finger passed over the leaf, directed a glance to her sister; a faint, but bitter smile crossed her features; but meeting the glance which sought to discover if she had recognised the song, she mournfully shook her head.—" No, Fanny, no, 'tis not that can hurt me; the cause is here," and she laid her hand on her heart. She soon after called for a pencil, and, with almost inconceivable rapidity, penned the following, which she entitled,

A SONG OF DESPAIR.

'Tis past!—No more with kindling blushes
Shall joy irradiate my cheek;
I'll bind my brow with sea-green rushes,
And coral shells my hair shall deck.

A wither'd

A wither'd rose my breast shall cover,
Sad willow's tears my heart enshrine,
And o'er the world, a pilgrim rover,
In sorrow's wildest garb I'll pine.

With straw I'll weave a maniac's cradle,
While low around sad zephyrs sigh;
Dark clouds shall be my covering sable,
And howling winds my lullaby.

When morning dawns, my sust'nance seeking,
Black sloes a welcome food shall prove;
For bitter grief my heart is breaking,
And sorrow frowns upon my love.

I'll climb the brows of lofty mountains,
And seek the eagle's callow brood;
I'll dive beneath the crystal fountain,
And search its water'd base for food.

I'll seek of lambs the tend'rest yearling,
And with its wool my limbs enrobe;
For grief has robb'd my breast of feeling,
And black despair my wildness prove.

For, ah, 'tis past!—No more with blushes
Shall joy irradiate my cheek;
I'll bind my brow with sea-green rushes,
And coral shells my hair shall deck.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XI.



Last came joy's ecstatic trial.

Ode to the Passions.

POOR Matilda, notwithstanding all the exertions of her reason, found her spirits fail her, as the absence of Mr. Betham was prolonged beyond the week he had named as the extent of the term of his absence; and most joyfully did she receive him, for she hailed his return as a release from the assiduities of captain Prince; and when she discovered the joyful expression so legibly written on his reflective countenance, she had almost determined to ask an explanation of all she had seen—of all she had heard. But what she had seen seemed to bring such direct conviction to her mind, that she dared not trust to the sugges-

tions

tions of her heart in her husband's favour; by so doing she might have saved herself some weeks distress; but Providence determined that she should no longer be placed in a situation to risk the alienation of her affections from her husband.

Matilda was one day already at the dining-room, awaiting the arrival of her husband, when Mr. Dermont was announced, and at the same moment entered the room. Matilda was so much struck with the alteration in his person and manner, that her look and manner both expressed the interest they caused in her bosom; and as he extended his hand, his friendly grasp was returned by a pressure which at once conveyed her sympathy and esteem.

Scarcely were the commonplace inquiries over, when he asked, with much emotion, if she had that day received

a letter

a letter from Elmwell; she replied in the negative, in a tone of surprise, which seemed to say she had no immediate expectation of a letter.

"I beg your pardon," cried Dermont, "but I understood, from Mr. Betham, that the hopes springing from—from—from—Eliza—from Mrs. Beverly's interview with her long lost sister, if realized, would be announced to-day."

"Is Frances then restored to her sister?"

Dermont now stared in his turn.—"Is it possible you can be ignorant of a circumstance which——" Dermont paused; he was going to add, "which Mr. Betham announced to me," but he said, "which must be productive of so much pleasure to you?"

The emotions of Matilda it is most difficult to define. Perhaps she was not herself aware of the extent of them. Since her husband's return, his manner had

had resumed all its affection; the most tender solicitude was visible in every action. Sometimes she would cast over his countenance the strictest glance of scrutiny; no deceptive mark, no conscious guilt, lurked in the eye falling beneath her gaze, but it was met with the smile of pleasurable affection; her heart imbibed the assurance, but her judgment was not sufficiently satisfied to demand the explanation her feelings so much desired.

With the attentions of captain Prince she was still persecuted; but as she could avoid seeing him alone, and as she would avoid every attempt at conversation with him, he gained but little from his assiduities; but conviction now amounted to certainty, her heart thrilled with delight; but the tear which filled her eye was suppressed, and her habitual self-command instantaneously returned; and turning to Mr. Dermont, she

she said—"Though I am entirely at a loss to understand why this circumstance has been concealed from me, I am too much interested for the dear Elizabeth not to pursue the inquiry, now it has been made to me. How—pray tell me, in what way it has affected her mind? is she restored to reason?"

But if Dermont was surprised that Matilda had not learnt that Frances was restored to her sister, his surprise was faint, compared to the astonishment which took possession of Matilda, as she witnessed the emotion of Dermont at this question. After a long internal struggle, the tear mounted to his eye; but it lingered not there—it paced down his cheek, whose colour varied from the most ashy paleness to the deepest crimson. He arose, and walked to the window; and Mr. Betham entering, they sat down to dinner.

During

During the dinner any particular conversation was, of course, prevented by the presence of the servants; and almost immediately as the wine was placed on the table, Matilda retired to her dressing-room. Her mind was so pleasurably engrossed by the discovery she had made, that she was surprised when Mr. Betham came in search of her. Dermont, having left his compliments, had declined seeking her, having an engagement for the evening.

Secure now of any interruption, Matilda threw herself into the arms of her husband, and made known to him her suspicions, beginning with the scene at the milliner's, and concluding with Dermont's unexpected question — the delightful conviction which instantaneously flashed upon her mind, when she found that he had restored her to her sister, and that whatever had occasioned the

the mystery, her brother and sister must be acquainted with it.

Surprise, regret, anxiety, and admiration, were depicted in Betham's countenance at the narration; and bitterly did he deprecate the concealment which he had meant in tenderness to her he loved more than life; and forcibly did he express the admiration with which he contemplated the nobleness of mind and correct principle she had displayed in this difficult trial. He would then have given, in return, the explanation which these circumstances demanded, but she would not immediately attend to it; but he did not seek his pillow till he had given her a history of every occurrence connected with this misguided girl; and the bitter tears Matilda wept at this proof of her brother's immorality were mingled with those of rapture at the indefatigable zeal her husband had displayed in his rescue of this unfortunate girl;

girl; though its effect, by engrossing his mind, had given to his manner that appearance of abstraction, and had employed his time in a way so unaccountable to her, that it had first aroused suspicions so painful to her affectionate heart and correct mind.

Having concluded his narration, he continued—"Though confident in this affair of your forgiveness, I cannot so easily accord it to myself, for it almost appears that my disposition has a tendency to mystery, as an occurrence, most highly interesting at the time, took place previous to my knowledge of you, which I always feared to confess; feeling, as I do at this moment, your superiority, how was it possible for me to confess a circumstance which favoured so much of that precipitant judgment, which, forming an estimate from appearances, and receiving conviction through the medium

medium of the senses, too often leads to error and disappointment?

He then recounted his adventure at the ball, when he met Elizabeth, his journey to Elmwell, and her rejection; and thus was his confusion at the mention of that family accounted for; and Matilda, as she placed her hand in his, confessed, that of all the faces she had ever seen, that of Elizabeth was most likely to leave that impression he had described.—" In regularity of feature, in delicacy of complexion, every thing was superior; but hers is so rich in the mind's best endowments, in the affections of the heart, and in the display of all that is most generous and good in the play of the passions, and her manner so tinctured with the emanations of a heart warm and benevolent in all its impulses—so attentive to the feelings of others, and so regardless of her own convenience, that my surprise is more elicited

elicited that so many escape, than that such numbers are attracted to her."

"It was not in that beauty of expression," replied Betham, "fascinating as you have described it, nor in that glowing manner, finely as you have depicted it, that my admiration was centered; but in that rapid expression of varying emotion, which spoke the union of so many virtues in a bosom capable of uniting effects the most opposite. In every the most trifling circumstance, character was depicted. As my eye followed her through the windings of the dance, her look, her action, every movement, declared the enthusiasm with which she entered into its enjoyment; but over the luxuriant graces she displayed in this exercise there was spread such a beautiful colouring of modesty and delicacy—the blush on her cheek, the tremor of her manner, and the expression of her downcast eye, seemed so

imploringly

imploringly to entreat your candour to pardon what it could not approve, that the most sensual libertine was awed into respect, and the rigid censor charmed into admiration."

"That was the evening on which captain Prince first saw her."

"It was; she had been dancing with him, and was again engaged; but Miss Dermont expressed a wish to dance, and with the most unaffected generosity she gave up her partner, under the plea of being tired with the exercise, and retired to a window, when, in a moment, her look, her air, changed, from the most brilliant attraction and imposing dignity, to an humility so unequivocal—a regret so evident, that in pausing to admire the play of a countenance never settled, I could trace every feeling I could wish to discover in the heart of a female at a public assembly. I approached, and begged her to remove from the open window, so dangerous;

a conversation ensued, which told me I was not deceived in my estimate of the powers of her mind; and my heart whispered, that with a sensibility keen and lively as hers, I might make any impression, implant any character."

Matilda, restored to her husband's confidence, lost no time in recounting to him the annoyance she had received from captain Prince; he was immediately given to understand that his visits could be dispensed with; and finding, from this circumstance, that the breach he had endeavoured to widen between Mr. Betham and his amiable partner was healed, desisted altogether from a pursuit in which he had now no hope of success; but his bosom imbibed a yet more deadly hatred against Betham, and he panted for an opportunity to revenge what he could not determine to emulate.

CHAP.

CHAPTER XII.



"And Fancy's emblems lost their glow,
And Hope's sweet lines were all defac'd;
And Love himself could scarcely know
What Love himself had lately trac'd."

"My horses *instantly! immediately!*" cried Dermont to his servant, who was attending him at breakfast; and again he turned to the paper, to assure himself it was no illusion he witnessed; again he read the paragraph; it certainly announced the death of major Beverly, with all the circumstances which proved his identity. This communication, at such a moment too, when, with a conviction of Elizabeth's truth, he had received the heart-rending intelligence of her derangement! but when he reverted to her long-lived attachment, that love

which had withstood, time, absence, and mystery, which had triumphed over mutual affection, which had subdued her virtue, and overpowered her reason, he must indulge in the hope, that his sight, the tones of his voice, would recall her fleeting recollection to the remembrance of those scenes in which her heart had been so deeply interested; but in the intervals of his journey, when, pausing for refreshment, his mind had time for reflection, he would, in adverting to his desertion of this fascinating woman, think it was impossible she should forgive him. At length he espied the spires of the little church at Elmwell; his own chimneys next appeared, and then he imagined (what will not love suggest?) that he could discover the trees which embowered the cottage, where so many delightful hours had been spent.

It was an evening in the latter end of

of February, that he completed his journey. It was too late to attempt seeing either Elizabeth or her sister on that night; but he could view the cottage— he could walk towards the pond, from whose waters he had saved her child— he could retrace in the orchard those steps he had paced when with her—and he could again see the spot where his jealousy received a confirmation, which induced him so cruelly to fly her presence; but it was the spot where he had last beheld her form; he again approached it; but the shutter was now closed, and no voice reached his ear. He spent two hours in this way, and then retired to bed, but not to rest. He had learned that Mrs. Beverly was much better, that she now entered into the business of the family, but that she sometimes displayed proofs of an unsound reason, and that her health was fast declining.

Various reflections emanating from

these circumstances, and other heart-rending recollections, kept him waking: but towards morning he sunk into a dose, which however left him heavy and unrefreshed. He arose to a morning unusually mild and cheerful; not a cloud obscured the sun—not a breeze ruffled the evergreens which surrounded the Lodge.

Having breakfasted, he again hastened to the cottage; but that he might not, by appearing too unexpectedly, surprise her his heart throbbed to behold, he determined on crossing the fields, and, going the memorable one where his spaniel had discovered the child, ask at the kitchen-door for Frances. He had already gained the enclosure which led to this field—had already separated the branches, that, by leaping the bank, he might avoid a corner, which would detain him two minutes longer, when, intuitively turning to survey the pond, the scene

scene of an event so productive of reflection, he was rooted to the spot, by a discovery of the object in whom every thought, hope, and wish were centered.

She was seated on a bank near the edge of the water; her form, thin and pale, to Dermont seemed to wear the livery of death; for no animating tint gave life to the dead and faint white apparent on her face—no conscious blush, fleeting as the clouds of April; the beautiful vermilion of her lips too was displaced; and that pouting roundness which had rendered her mouth so enchanting was withered. Dermont shuddered as he gazed—" And is this the ruin I have made?" he mentally exclaimed. Again his eyes caught her form—that form, beautiful even in sickness, and majestic in poverty, had now lost its beauty and its majesty; it was so thin, it resembled the aerial lightness of a spectre, and it drooped in sorrow.

Her child, happy and lovely as youth and health could make her, was at the feet of her mother; in her hand was a basket, which held some snowdrops and crocuses; she was now employed in sorting them over the velvet carpet her little feet pressed. The eyes of Elizabeth were fixed on her left hand, while her other pressed the gold ring, which appeared above that placed there when her vows were plighted at the altar. Dermont trembled with contending emotions; he saw it raised to her lips— "She yet loves me," he ejaculated. "But what means that look of despair? why, as she draws it from her finger, does she raise her eyes so imploringly to heaven?"

Again is the ring replaced—again withdrawn—now pressed to her bosom —and now his ears catch the faint sound of her voice; but not those tones so rich in expressing the varied emotions of a heart alive to every impression, but the broken,

broken, hoarse accents of despair, sometimes relapsing into that rapidity which shews mental derangement—" Yes, yes, the sacrifice must be made—no memorial shall remain—he is lost—his affection is forgotten! why then should I wear this ring? it was given as a pledge of love—the contract is broken—how could it be binding?—was it not forced from the violation of duty?—duty—duty——" She now seemed lost. " Here it was he saved Frances, and here was the peril braved which made him mine—and is it not right then that this should receive his last remembrance?—Why do I hesitate?" she continued; " nothing in this world can afford consolation to me, and my welfare in another demands this sacrifice." She now knelt, and raising her eyes and hands to heaven, remained for some moments in prayer; and immediately, in the same attitude, drew the ring from her finger, and raising it towards heaven—" I have

conquered," she would have added, as her hand moved towards the water; but that hand was seized. She started—animation again flushed in the colour which now irradiated her countenance as she perceived Edmund before her; but she heard not his impassioned expressions—she heeded not his prayers for forgiveness; for the blush, so long a stranger to her cheek, fled, and Elizabeth became insensible.

Vain were all the efforts of Dermont, as, almost frantic, he sought to recover her; to leave her in this state was impossible, and his trembling frame refused to aid his wishes to convey her himself to the house; but aid was at hand; the little Frances, whose cries were unheeded by Edmund, had run to the house, and now returned with Frances and Mrs. Bertram, and Elizabeth was carried thither. Dermont only waited to hear the name of her medical attendant, ere he

went

went in pursuit of him. To this gentleman, who was sensible and humane, Dermont entrusted as many of the particulars, which rendered his interview with Elizabeth so interesting to her, as was necessary, conceiving that as now no bar existed to their union, which he hoped would speedily take place, the extreme precaution which would have urged secrecy was unnecessary.

Elizabeth was recovered from the fainting fit previous to their return, and a change, to her attendants not less surprising than welcome, was evident; instead of the dead pale white, which had hitherto marred the beautiful intelligence of her expressive countenance, her face was now rapidly changing from pale to crimson, and two or three temporary suspensions of sense and feeling had taken place; but her mind seemed again restored to its original purity—nothing of that fanciful cast which had pervaded

every thought and action now appeared, but in its place, a calm resignation was visible. She had inquired, with little apparent emotion, if Mr. Dermont was in the house, and was answered in the negative. A half-suppressed sigh followed this reply; but she soon seemed lost in prayer.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XIII.



"And I prayed of that spirit, who lighted the flame,
That pleasure no more might its purity dim;
And that sullied but little, or brightly the same,
I might give back the gem I had borrowed from him.

The thought was ecstatic! I felt as if Heaven
Had already the wreath of eternity shewn,
As if, passion all chasten'd, and error forgiven."

Explanations.

As soon as the agitation of his spirits would permit, Dermont sat down to give to Elizabeth an explanation of that part of his conduct which seemed to her mysterious; but as the reader is already acquainted with many circumstances then detailed, we shall merely proceed to the elucidation of that part of it which has not already come under consideration.

It

It may be remembered, that after Dermont left Elmwell, he proceeded on a tour, from the first stage of which he wrote the letter which produced on Elizabeth so melancholy an effect. Resentment and injured pride claimed pre-eminence in his heart; but that heart could not at once forget the pleasure he had known in the society of Elizabeth. Hers was not the triumph of beauty, but of mind, of passion, and of tenderness; and her idea was so interwoven in his destiny, that it was associated with every action, almost with every thought: if she was banished in the evening's hilarity, she was again with him in the midnight dream; did he read, the sentiments of others he had been so accustomed to consider interwoven with her own ideas, that when any thing particularly attracted his attention, his imagination was busily tracing in what way her brilliant genius would construe the thing; did he on his road pause to contemplate any

burst

burst of prospect, the idea of her delight, could she with him have viewed it, called her to his side; and where now could he look for the affection, the tenderness, her natural and impassioned character made so delightful? With her all was rapture; without her, creation a dreary blank; its most beautiful works uninteresting atoms in the scale of nature—but she was lost to him for ever.

So pure, so disinterested, was the attachment he first felt for her, that he would have turned with horror from the idea of gratifying his passion, at the expence of her peace of mind, which he was well aware would attend the subversion of her virtue; but when, from circumstances, the purity of her mind became sullied in his ideas, his love, glancing only towards the enthusiastic tenderness of her character, shewn in every look, exhibited in every action, gained in ardour what it lost in reverence, and

the

the adoration of the angel was exchanged for an earthly passion; but in a passion so powerful, so enchanting, it overpowered every other consideration. Every pursuit was neglected in which she was not associated—every amusement disregarded when she was not present; and when far away, the native candour, the generosity of her disposition, when any circumstance brought them to memory, appeared as witnesses to disprove what his senses had witnessed; and his heart insensibly softened towards her; even his judgment seemed at variance with the conviction his senses afforded; and instead of extending his tour, he drew towards London, to acquire the information he had no other means of gaining. He sought out Betham, and from him learned the shock her reason had sustained.

We have attempted to follow the emotions which by turns agitated the

bosom

bosom of Dermont, as connected with Elizabeth; but to describe the feelings which now overpowered him, was impossible, as he traced, in the letters Betham committed to him, the influence of despair over a mind so beautiful—that face so expressively delineating the emotions of a soul, alive to all that was great and good, now lost in the stupor of hopeless grief; and the cause—no! 'twas not solely the loss of the child; to his heart conscience whispered, "thou art the man," and to his bosom she was restored in all her original purity, for of her truth to him he could not now doubt, and his heart loudly whispered that in hers, all the virtues still found a home; and for the one blemish which would to the world obscure all their brilliancy, was it not to him an additional motive for affection? for if virtue glowed so vividly there, how powerful must be that love which could extinguish its force! yet how to act, he was still undecided; to force him-

self

self into her presence, might be fatal, and to give her up to the scorn of the world, by resuming his visits to her, would be cruel.

Thus was he situated, when the paper which contained intelligence of the death of major Beverly met his perusal. No consideration now could counteract the impulses of his heart, which forced him to Elmwell. A thousand schemes presented themselves, as means for introducing him to his heart's idol; but each was rejected; and he bent his way to the cottage, determined to act as circumstances prompted him. The result has been communicated.

Wishing that Elizabeth should be made acquainted with the death of her husband, previously to her receiving this exculpation, he went to the parsonage, to entreat that Walter Darnley would take upon himself the task; and he had scarcely

scarcely unfolded the purport of his visit, ere they were interrupted by a servant, who brought in a packet from India. It contained the will of major Beverly, with some letters. The one to Walter Darnley implored him to accept the office of guardian and protector to his wife and child—his detestation of the machinations of lady Worthing to make her sister odious to him; and concluded with hoping, that the sale of his effects, &c. would produce six or eight hundred pounds, which he trusted would yield her a comfortable support, till some more worthy man might, in a second union, render her more happy than the first had done.

Walter immediately proceeded to the cottage. Elizabeth, under the influence of an opiate administered by her medical attendant, was sleeping; and he returned, having communicated the intelligence, of which he was the bearer, to Frances,

Frances, to use as her discretion might prompt; but not having much reliance on her discretion or judgment, sent down his sister Beatrice, to assist in the communication.

As soon as the fair invalid awoke, she called, terrified and confusedly, for her child, for in her mind some particular and agitating circumstances were connected with the pond, which held so prominent a place in her memory. Maternal fondness immediately glanced towards her child as the object of them; but as memory returned, every circumstance passed in review before her; and Dermont, that Dermont who held such power over her fate, stood confessed; yet so impossible did it seem, that he, that Edmund, who had relinquished her, should again be at her feet, with looks, voice, and manner so impassioned, that she again believed herself under the influence of an illusory dream, till feeling

on

on her finger, she felt his ring yet there, and was convinced.

These thoughts passed in review with the rapidity of an electric shock. But the appearance of Beatrice with her child restored to her the usual current of ideas. Having inquired of her health, Beatrice placed herself by the bedside, and proceeded to speak of such subjects as might best prepare her mind for the intelligence she had to communicate; and then inquired if Elizabeth had heard of the late arrival of ships from India? She replied in the negative, and her voice trembled in the emotion the inquiry had excited. She then proceeded to say, the papers had specified the death of one or two from that part of England. She caught the alarm—"Beverly is dead?" she cried, in a hollow voice of inquiry. Beatrice was silent. "Oh! relieve my suspense! in pity——he is dead!"

Cautiously

Cautiously as Beatrice had prepared her for this discovery, it was too much for her—she fainted; but having recovered, proceeded to entreat to be left with Beatrice; and raising herself on her elbow, entreated to know if her husband had cursed her on his dying bed?

"Cursed you! oh no! he died in the conviction of your worth, imploring Heaven's choicest blessings on you and on your child."

Elizabeth no longer looked towards her friends; her arm dropped from supporting her head, and her face was hidden in the pillow—"Leave me," she cried; "I entreat you would leave me."

Beatrice, after kissing her hand, granted her request; and oh! how bitter were the reflections which now obtruded themselves! Every palliative circumstance, drawn from her husband's strange conduct, was forgotten; and she remembered

bered him only as the attached friend he appeared at the altar.

The manner of Dermont was now partly accounted for; but bitter was the sting in her bosom, at the reflection of the manner in which he had thrown her from him—that it was a start of momentary passion she did not doubt; but how could she expect happiness from a man capable of such inconsistencies? But she feared something yet deeper had influenced his conduct; she could not forget that she had forfeited her own esteem; she had therefore forfeited his confidence—his respect. Honour, passion, might induce him to make her his wife; but what was that title without the tie of affection, which could only spring from equality? and to the virtue which would have arrogated this epithet, she had lost all claim; besides, now that the false glare of passion, the endearments of tenderness, were no longer hers, the mask

had fallen from her eyes; she could no longer live for her lover; and how could she claim the world's applause, conscious as she was of having forfeited all claim to it? and she felt all the guilt in which she was involved; nothing then was left to her but a life of penitence and sorrow. To Heaven now must every hope be directed; in acts of charity, in endeavours to purify her mind for the change she hoped might not long be delayed, must the remnant of her days be passed. In reflections such as these was the night passed.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XIV.

But not to thee,
Meek spirit, not to thee the morn is fair,
Nor gleam the sunbeams cheerily. Alas!
The early carol of the woodland choir,
Echoing so sweetly in the dewy fields,
Thou hearest not. Wrapt in the arms of death,
Thou can'st not feel the rising sun's warm ray—
Thou can'st not mark the beauty of the morn.

Anthology.

In the morning, when Walter Darnley called, he found her already risen. The marks of deep sorrow were yet visible on her countenance, but the stupidity of despair was no longer visible. Her eyes flashed even brighter than they were wont, and a faint semblance of the shade which once spoke on her cheek was

again there. She read Walter's letter, and marks of profound agitation were evident in her manner; and when she arrived at the part which spoke of her marriage, she mournfully shook her head —her own was laid by for her perusal in private.

At their next interview the will was opened; every thing he could leave was at her disposal. This amounted, as a letter from his agent disclosed, to about seven hundred pounds. She consulted with Walter as to its disposal. She intended leaving this neighbourhood altogether, and to Walter's remonstrances against it, she referred him to a letter his sister would receive from her. In this letter she portrayed to Beatrice every event connected with her knowledge of Dermont; she attempted not to extenuate her guilt; she deprecated the manner in which it had been aggravated, by wearing the semblance of virtue to friends

friends so estimable as they were; and finally declared her resolution, as the best proof she could give of her sincere repentance, to refuse his offered hand. As his wife, her thoughts would be again called from heaven; she should look to earth again as a scene of happiness. Her letter to Dermont contained the same resolution, and she gave him back his ring. She did not affect resentment at the conduct which had so long seemed inexplicable; she did not deny her love for him; on the contrary, it was depicted in the most glowing colours, for it was the last time she could allow herself the indulgence, for she must leave the country altogether.

In answer to this he solicited an interview, trusting still in his power over her heart. It was granted; but vain were all his entreaties, though the agitation of her manner, almost verging towards insanity, betrayed the interest she

felt for him. Her resolution was taken; no entreaties could make her swerve from it. Her idea of leaving the country—of foregoing the society of the Darnleys, he would not hear of. If she went, he would follow; if she continued here, he would never obtrude himself upon her; and as the answer to her letter to Beatrice had been a visit, in which, even with tears, she combatted this resolution, preserving to the penitent all the friendship she had felt for the guiltless girl, and promising to aid the cause in which she was engaged, she consented to this latter proposal.

The effects of this determination on the mind of Dermont may be better imagined than described. His sorrow was almost absorbed in the admiration her conduct excited, and while he mourned her loss, he felt that he loved her more than ever, and he felt his own unworthiness; and to Dermont this conviction

viction was but a stimulus to exertion; he too became a penitent—he sought the converse of Walter Darnley, whose principles were too good to refuse his assistance in so good a work; but his heart was too much interested for Elizabeth to become the companion of a man in whom her peace of mind had been ruined.

Elizabeth most indefatigably pursued the course marked out by herself; and if she did not return to all the strictness her heart had once acknowledged, she felt enough of the power of religion to subdue her rebellious wishes, to regulate her hopes, and to ground a rational belief that her penitence, her prayer, would be accepted, and she felt her penance would not be long. The struggle of insanity had been too much for her frame, and she now felt herself in a decline; but as no complaint passed her lip, as the cough which indicated her

decay was suppressed, and as no action indicated the pain which she now so frequently felt, the hectic which now flushed her cheek, the fire which sparkled in her eye, were hailed by her friends as symptoms of health and returning comfort to all but Walter; and his anxiety traced to their true source the inroad sorrow was making on her life; could she be restored to self-esteem, there might be hope, and Heaven had sanctioned true penitence by joyfully receiving it to its bosom. To him she was now dearer than in all the pride of youthful beauty; he had no fears for her future conduct; he entreated her to become his wife.

Surprise for a moment chained her tongue; and, oh, how feeble are words to portray the emotions which glowed in her bosom!—"My God, I thank thee!" she cried; "my child then will not be an outcast from society, since Walter Darnley

ley would unite his fate with hers; and yet," she continued, turning to her lover, who hailed this apostrophe as propitious, "how selfish I should deem myself for thus considering my own feelings alone, could I imagine that any thing more warm than pity animated you to this proposal! for my head is bowed down with shame, and my spirit broken by guilt, and surely my peace will be in the arms of death. Judge then if I can become a wife; least of all, can I become the wife of a man like you, deserving of every good the earth can bestow. For my child I would ask your pity, your protection; in becoming your wife, I should give her something of a claim to it; but to your heart, and not to worldly ties, would I be indebted."

Walter pleaded his cause with all the enthusiasm of love, but in vain; and finding all entreaty useless, solemnly promised to take her child under his own immediate eye.

Elizabeth's tears flowed fast—"You have indeed smoothed the pillow of death; my Frances will be taught to avoid those errors which have been her mother's bane."

CHAPTER XV.



But as for thee, thou false woman,
My sister and my foe,
Grim Vengeance yet shall whet a sword
That through thy soul shall go:
The weeping blood in woman's breast
Was never known to thee;
Nor the balm that drops on wounds of woe
From woman's pitying e'e.

BURNS' *Lament of Mary Queen of Scots.*

Retribution.

ON the following morning Elizabeth was surprised by a visit from sir George Worthing, as for some time all communication had ceased between them; for she could not forget the unheard-of cruelty which would have deprived her of her child, and lady Worthing was anxious to avail herself of the excuse to veil

her inattention to her unfortunate sister; and to cover her real character more effectually, she did not fail to spread the most injurious insinuations of her character, in which captain Bennet was implicated; but of this circumstance Elizabeth was ignorant.

Sir George seemed much struck with the alteration he observed in her person, and after the common inquiries after her health, he seemed to pause as unknowing how to speak on the subject of his visit. At length he began by saying, that however unwilling he might be to agitate one in her delicate state of health, yet, as his happiness was at stake, he trusted she would not deem him guilty of an unpardonable liberty, nor deem him influenced by mere curiosity, if he inquired if that letter (producing one on which Elizabeth recognised captain Bennet's writing on her address) was written to her?

Vain was the caution sir George had addressed to her, for the emotion of Elizabeth was extreme. Every feeling of her bosom was called into action, and each one at variance. Candour, truth, and justice, commanded her to unfold to sir George the conduct of his wife; on the other hand, her promise, generosity, and pity, demanded her silence. The world now possessed too few charms for her, for a romantic act of self-denial to yield that pleasure it would once have given her. Her days were numbered, and she felt that very few more would pass over her head. Could she hope a discovery would effect a reformation, she would most thankfully avail herself of it; but she much feared, if driven from her husband, she would plunge into yet deeper guilt, while sir George would be made miserable.

Sir George observed her agitation. To a common mind it wore the appearance

of guilt. "I am satisfied, madam;" and drawing from his pocket a packet containing various others, he continued, "I have only now to entreat that another may never be consigned to my wife. She had nearly, from circumstances, suffered from having been your confidant." He paused again. "Elizabeth, I loved you once—how truly you well know; let not poverty plunge you into guilt; my purse has before been offered through your sister; suffer me again to offer it to your acceptance."

The tears now started into her eyes. "Kind, good sir George, be assured, I have much more than I can avail myself of here, and my child has the promise of a friend for its provision. I am sorry to leave so vile an impression on your mind, but——" She paused.

Sir George rose, and wringing her hand, left the room. But his lady had not long

long to triumph in the success of her scheme; even now a discovery awaited her. Sir George had been much affected with the preceding scene; instead, therefore, of making more calls in the neighbourhood, as he had purposed, he went home, but quitting the high road, chose his path through a grove where there was no regular horsepath. Here he discovered his wife and captain Bennet, and from their conversation he could neither doubt Elizabeth's innocence or his lady's guilt. A challenge followed —they met in the evening—Bennet fell, and sir George became an exile. Yet ere he left the kingdom, he secured a trifling income on his wife, to secure her from actual want, and to prevent actual necessity forcing her to the commission of guilt. As he had no legal proofs of her criminality, he could not procure a divorce.

Dermont was surprised by the receipt

of

of a letter from captain Bennet, written on the morning in which he fell, in which was detailed the various occurrences which had tended to impress his mind with the volatility of Elizabeth. These had come only partially and gradually to his knowledge, and it was not till the night which succeeded to sir George's interruption to their *tête-à-tête*, and which immediately preceded the morning appointed for their meeting, that a conviction of the flagrancy of lady Worthing's crimes came across him.— Now it was, that, taking a review of her early conduct with respect to himself, he was stung by the reflection, that for a woman incapable of passion, much less of love, he had stained his soul with crime and sacrificed his life; for no consideration would now have induced him to return the fire he was resolved on giving his adversary. His resolution was not tried. Bennet fell on the first fire.

Though

Though Dermont was not surprised at this confirmation of his fears that he had been the dupe of circumstances, the letter yet revived a faint hope in his bosom, that Elizabeth, having now the regular system of deceit, which an unworthy woman planned, unfolded to her, would be induced to retract her determination of refusing her hand; he therefore again wrote, and enclosing Bennet's letter, implored her consideration of its contents.

Her answer was concise and simple. —"She was sorry that Dermont had so far mistaken her sentiments as to imagine resentment still retained an influence in her heart. She now deeply felt the errors of her conduct. From them she traced the separation that had taken place, and her subsequent guilt. In a union with him, she should have found so much of earthly happiness, that in its enjoyment she feared she should have

forgotten

forgotten to deplore the guilt which led to it. Her prayers were daily offered for its forgiveness, and with her own were mingled fervent petitions for his welfare here and hereafter. She entreated him not again to interrupt her tranquillity by appeals which could only be answered in the same way.

Every earthly hope thus destroyed, Dermont nourished a despair which undermined his health, and a contrition which almost affected his mind; for he shunned society—was scarcely visible during the day, and mourned in almost hopeless misery through the night, seeking, by every means, to fix his thoughts on a better world, and to modify his conduct that he might hope to obtain eternal happiness.

CHAP.

CHAPTER XVI.



Still over head
The mingling tempest weaves its gloom. *Seasons.*

. . . .

Thou hast deserv'd from me
Far, far beyond what I can ever pay.
Oft have I prov'd the labours of thy love,
And the warm efforts of the gentle heart,
Anxious to please. *The Grave.*

. . . .

Nature could no more;
She look'd, embrac'd him, with a groan expir'd.

— — — — — —

He strove to speak;
Nor words he found; he clasp'd her in his arms;
He sigh'd, he swoon'd, look'd up, and died away.

THOMSON.

IT was in an evening in the beginning of October, that, having been unusually depressed during the day, by accounts of the

the rapid decay of Elizabeth, who was now confined to her bed, Edmund had sought the little church of the village, and had traced, with agonizing interest, the spot which would now soon enclose the remains of her so loved, and had paused, with melancholy pleasure, on the probability that he too should soon occupy a portion of the same earth. His thoughts glanced towards Heaven; and lost in prayer and pious meditation, neglected to note the lapse of time, till sudden and repeated flashes of lightning aroused him from his reflections.

Aware of the effect of a tempest on the frame of Elizabeth, which had from childhood suffered from the most terrible agitation in a tempest, he darted towards her lowly dwelling, heedless of the effect of the storm on his own person, though it now raged with more frightful fury than before. Such a hurricane had never been remembered in the neigh-

bourhood.

bourhood. As he approached the dwelling, every faculty was for a moment absorbed, in the horror of perceiving that mingled flame and smoke, made visible by the vivid lightning which played around, burst from the cottage. The remembrance of Elizabeth in danger again aroused him, and he sprang forward.

He reached the cottage; but so terrific was the storm, that, either from fear, or that standing so low, its situation was not observed—no creature had reached it. A loud shriek greeted Edmund as he approached the door; but in vain did he attempt an entrance; his efforts were unheard amid the fury of the storm. A short ladder was near; he placed it against one of the little casements on the first floor, which he knew was unprovided with shutters; it was that which lighted the little staircase; the window yielded to his touch, and Dermont found himself

himself at the door of Elizabeth's apartment. Overcome with the conflict of feeling which agitated his bosom, he paused—he feared to introduce himself abruptly to her who had roused him to this exertion; but not a moment was to be lost—the thatch was burning rapidly. He heard a light step—it approached—it was Mrs. Bertram, pale and ghastly as the image of horror—"Thank Heaven!" she rather screamed than said, "here is Mr. Dermont!"

"Dermont!" exclaimed a voice, which he would scarcely have recognised in its tones, had not the faint tremor which accompanied its utterance, recalled him to those days, now flashing on memory with that exquisite pleasure and pain, rapture and remorse, which their flight had created, and he was on his knees at her bedside; he grasped her hand—"Save my child!"

"I will return for her! You must go first!"

"Hear

"Hear me, Dermont. I have not many hours to live; should I be buried in these ruins, my soul will yet wing its flight to realms of eternal bliss I humbly hope to gain; no power on earth shall compel my removal, till my child and my sister are in safety."

The tone in which this was uttered prevented any further entreaty; but never had he sustained so difficult a conflict with himself; yet he felt almost repaid when, on quitting her bedside—"May Heaven bless and shield him!" greeted his ears.

Rousing Mrs. Bertram, who seemed almost stupified with terror, he darted to the room opposite to that Elizabeth occupied; there, on a small couch, he found the treasure he sought, sweetly wrapped in the arms of sleep; the other bed was empty. Directing Mrs. Bertram to search for Frances, he was hurrying down stairs,

stairs, when, oh! what a sight met his view! Frances and her child extended on the floor, mangled and defaced with blood! It appeared that, terrified by the storm, she had quitted her couch with her child, to rouse Mrs. Bertram and her sister, who occupied the same room; but in her fright, going too near the edge of the narrow staircase, her foot had slipped, and she had fallen to the bottom. Dermont thought of the shriek he had heard; her screams had awoke Bertram; but, united with the lightning, had been too much for her, and she had fainted; and it was only as Dermont entered, that she had succeeded in waking Elizabeth, who, under the influence of a soporific, had heard not the storm.

Dermont was now almost in despair; he feared to trust his precious charge to Bertram in her present agitated state; begging her, therefore, to provide blankets, &c. to convey poor Frances to the next cottage,

cottage, he flew with the child towards it, intending, with the contents of his pocketbook, to bribe their attendance. The doors were open, for the tempest was abated; and having deposited his burthen on the pillow, which the peasants had just quitted, entered the cottage, and had assisted Bertram to place Frances on the best litter they could construct, ere their neighbours entered. To their care he consigned her; and giving her child (which he had before ascertained to be dead) to the care of Bertram, again ascended the stairs in search of Elizabeth, nor heeding, scarcely hearing, the entreaties of the peasants to escape with them, there being no possibility of saving Mrs. Beverly.

Again he approached the bed; no word gave evidence that she was conscious of his presence; he drew yet nearer; no breath announced her yet an inhabitant

tant of this world—" Is her pure spirit indeed fled?" This truth he could not wait to ascertain, but wrapping her in the counterpane, to shield her, as well from the flames, now bursting from all quarters into the room, as from the chill night air, he pressed towards the door. Scarcely had he quitted the bed, ere a fragment from above, penetrating the ceiling, buried it in flame and rubbish. Heedless of danger, he sprang down stairs, amid pieces of burning wood, flame, and smoke. Already had he reached the door, when, falling from above, a huge piece of timber from the roof impeded his progress. Almost franticly, and rather from impulse than reason, he turned towards the kitchen; but here the door was yet fastened; he wrenched the bar from its supporters, and found himself in the open air; but ere he could *think* a congratulation on his safety, the other end of the beam, which had before impeded

peded him, grazed his arm, as, observing its approach, he threw it round Elizabeth, to shield her from the danger.

Almost exhausted, yet still pursuing his course, he felt his inability to proceed much farther; yet to leave one so precious exposed to the open air, to the moisture now streaming in torrents from the skies, and pouring over the ground, was almost as pregnant with danger, as the situation he had rescued her from. Despairing, he cast his eyes around, and joyfully did they greet the object on which they fell, for it promised shelter, and they found it within the walls which enclosed a small apartment, used in summer as a sort of gala-room, where the children on birthdays and good days were regaled with cakes and fruit, and in winter, to screen a few greenhouse plants from its snows.

Here, on a couch, formed by two

stools and a chair, placed here for the accommodation of Elizabeth, who had for weeks been unable to sit up, did Dermont recline her; and kneeling by her side, did he anxiously seek to discover if her insensibility was that of death, or of suspended animation. No light assisted his endeavours, save that of the moon, now escaping the heavy cloud, which occasionally assisted its light by the pale flash of electric matter, which gleamed upon its surface, now robbed of its terror by distance, or when, from the smoking ruins, a blaze, more than usually brilliant, was emitted by the accession of some combustible material.

His own frame was sinking with pain; but he felt it not, so anxious was he to ascertain what he yet feared to discover. At length a faint pulsation about the heart was evinced; but he had no means of improving this symptom—he carried no restoratives about him; but recollecting

lecting he had almost fallen over a garden watering-pot at the entrance of this shelter, he availed himself of it, and a heavy sigh announced to his grateful heart that life was yet strong; and oh! how vivid was the emotion which fluttered there, when—"Edmund!—Dermont!" fell from her lips!

"Thank Heaven, she lives!—she speaks!" he would have added; but her faint accents again recalled his attention from his own feelings—"Where is my child?"

"Safe and happy."

"My sister and her dear girl?"

"In Ridge's cottage."

"And Bertram?"

"With them."

"Oh, Dermont, how much do I owe you!—I die in peace."

"Die! oh, Elizabeth, do you at this moment, when my heart is so surcharged with happiness, talk of dying? For

For pity's sake exert yourself—wish but to live, and to live is yet possible; the draught of water has renovated my spirits; I can yet support you till you reach your child."

"Oh, Edmund! do not again deceive yourself with false hopes. The little strength I have yet left would be spent ere I could gain even that shelter, and I have yet something I would say to you. You reproach yourself with my sufferings; ah, banish from your mind an idea so fatal to its tranquillity! I fell from pride—from my vaunted strength of mind. I was born with a lively imagination and good abilities, and my affections were strong; under judicious teachers, these might have been improved to my advantage, and the welfare of my friends; but, alas! I was left to my own guidance, or rather to the pernicious bias my mind had received. I loved virtue—oh! so ardently loved it, that I fancied it was a principle inherent in my nature,

nature, and fancied those burlesqued the human character who contended for the necessity of the aid of religion to conduct us to goodness."

"Oh, Elizabeth! your agitation kills me; it gives me a new proof of the sensibility I have wounded even unto death. You may pardon me," he continued, with solemnity, "but I can never forgive myself; and the bell which sounds your requiem will be my departing knell."

"No, Dermont—no! My child I leave with protectors kind and good; but my sister has no friends; be to her a brother—a protector! with beauty too exquisite to be borne without danger, she unites a gentleness of character, a pliability of disposition, which leaves her a prey to the deceiver. Oh, if I was ever dear to you, swear to me, while you live, never to desert her! could I but know her beauty had flown, I should die content, for she will never willingly encounter

 temptation.

temptation. Ah! do you hesitate upon my last request?"

Edmund was indeed silent; but it may be easily surmised, his was not the silence of hesitation whether he should accept the office, but of a conviction that he would not live to execute it, and of uncertainty whether he should convey to Elizabeth the situation of her sister, and which left but a faint, very faint prospect of a recovery to her former beauty; but he was soon decided.—"I swear!" he cried, and his faltering accents spoke the agitation of his soul.

"Dermont, I am going; but——"

"Going! oh Elizabeth!" he cried, throwing round her his arm, as if to arrest her spirit. The action spoke forcibly, and his tone of voice gave what his words were meant to convey.

"Yes, Dermont, I am going! but we shall meet again."

"And do you, Elizabeth, think," he

cried,

cried, in a tone of deep despondency, "that there is hope for such a wretch as me?"

"Edmund, from Walter Darnley I have heard of your deep contrition, of your efforts in the cause of religion, and conviction of its importance. The Saviour was sent to save sinners; and oh!" she cried, raising herself, while a moonbeam, falling on her features, showed their almost angelic expression, "do you not account it a proof of pardon that I am allowed to expire in your arms? Even in insanity this idea pursued me, and the little gleam of remembrance which illumines that dark period points to this view as pervading every thought. Since my restoration, it has obtruded in almost every prayer; and even when, closing my eyes on this world, I have contemplated another, it has, unbidden, rushed between me and futurity."

"Oh, Elizabeth! and am I yet so dear to you?"

 "Can

"Can you, Dermont, in retracing my little history, believe any thing short of a passion such as this could have surmounted my love of virtue, maternal duty, and vows registered at the altar?" Her breath grew faint—she exerted herself in mental prayer—tears filled her eyes—and turning towards him, she cried—"Edmund, ever model your conduct by the hope that we shall meet there——" Her voice now grew broken. "Edmund, forgive me, as I pardon you, and may God bless you! Take this kiss to my child, with my fervent blessing; to Beatrice—to Walter—to Frances, my benediction; and may your dying moment be blest as mine is!"

As a last effort, she turned her dying eyes towards him—every worldly thought was then forgotten; she signed to be laid down on the couch, but her head still rested on his arm. Nearly half-an-hour was passed in this way; at intervals

vals

vals her lips moved in silent prayer; and as a lengthened flash of the lightning, which still flitted through the air, gleamed on her face, the expression of her countenance declared her mind fixed in pious contemplation. Edmund heard voices round their shelter talking of him and of Elizabeth, and lamenting their fate; but the substance of their conversation passed over his ear, as the zephyr's lightest summer wind sweeps the rivulet. Every sense was absorbed in Elizabeth, except as a half-formed prayer passed his lips to be permitted to join her, till her fleeting spirit indeed fled, when he fell by her side, as insensible, as cold, and almost as inanimate.

CHAPTER XVII.

One grave contains this faithful hapless pair.

THOMSON.

. . . .

——————Thrice happy meeting!
Nor time, nor death, shall ever part them more.

The Grave.

In this situation were they found by some of the neighbours, who wanted something from the little room which had proved a shelter for the lovers. Dermont was taken home, and pronounced in a high fever, doubtless taken by his exertions at the fire; his arm was dreadfully lacerated, and the cold water he had taken in the summer-house produced effects likely to terminate most fatally.

In

In conformity to the request of Elizabeth, which Dermont made known as soon as speech was granted him, her body was not removed from the little couch on which she breathed her last, till it was removed to its last habitation.

We must draw a veil over the sensations of Walter; when he arrived at the cottage of Elizabeth, and learnt that, with Dermont, it was supposed she had perished in the flames, a grief, almost amounting to despair, came over him; and he was only recalled to a sense of his situation by the information he received of the situation of Beatrice, to whom he immediately hastened. Medical assistance was soon procured, and he learned, that though in no danger, her person was most completely defaced; her sight was gone for ever, from the effects of the electric fluid, and her leg was so badly broken in her fall, that it

was

was obliged to be amputated. In contemplating the ravages thus made in her beautiful person, in endeavouring to mitigate the anguish under which she laboured, and in soothing and caressing the little Frances Matilda, who vainly invoked her mother, no time was left for the soul-harrowing reflections of Elizabeth's terrible fate; and ere the first impressions of these circumstances had worn off, he was summoned to give directions for the disposal of Dermont, and all that now remained of her his heart had so fondly cherished.

Ere the former would accept of any assistance, he communicated to Walter all he had gathered of her last wishes from the affecting conversation which had preceded her death; but this was unnecessary, for in her bosom were found the letters which had employed her for weeks to pen to her several friends, and which were constantly laid under

under her pillow; the one to Walter was beautifully descriptive of the strong sense she entertained of his affection for her, which she begged might be now lost in the love he might bestow on her child, in whose youthful mind she already discerned the seeds of what had been so destructive to her happiness; but he had promised to be her guardian— he would then direct them to their proper object. To her other friends she wrote in a strain of affection and hope; but to lady Worthing she employed a different strain, adjuring her, as she hoped for future happiness, to reflect on her past errors, and enter on a new course of existence; it conveyed her forgiveness.

Walter's time was now divided between Dermont, his new charge, and the corse of Elizabeth, to whose shade he breathed vows to fulfil her last wishes; to her his prayers were uttered; and with the

the hour which conveyed her from his sight, he bade adieu to every hope of happiness.

Dermont had once, and once only, breathed a wish to be conveyed to her; but it being denied him, he urged it not, but busied himself to settle his accounts. To Walter Darnley he confided his will, which bequeathed one half of his property to his sister, the other half to Matilda Frances Beverly, with the deduction of one hundred and fifty pounds a-year to Frances Beverly for her life; and at her death the sum of one thousand pounds to her child. Walter Darnley was the sole executor.

At length the morning arrived which was to consign to earth's cold bosom the heroine of this tale. No splendid pomp announced the grandeur of external circumstances; by her last wishes not even a hearse attended to convey her to her

last

last home. Six young men, who had, as natives of the village, witnessed her growth from infancy to womanhood, bore the coffin; while their sisters, whose habits had rendered them more intimately acquainted with the beauties of her mind, supported the pall. Walter Darnley and his sister appeared as chief mourners—a neighbouring clergyman was summoned to officiate—the bell, from the first hour of morning, had been sounding its requiem—all was ready arranged for the solemn ceremony—the mourners only were wanting to complete the procession, when an order arrived that it might be delayed; all was surprise; but on the third morning all was again marshalled, and the procession received an addition, as unexpected as it was mournful; another coffin appeared to swell the train—it conveyed the body of Edmund Dermont; and if the history of Elizabeth wanted any appendage to complete the moral to be deducted from

her.

her sad fate, it must surely be drawn from the death of him whose passion, bursting the confines of reason, sought its gratification by the extinction of what, in romance, gives to genius, youth, grace, and beauty, its first excellence.

Dermont! if mind, talent, generosity, and manly spirit, could have bestowed happiness, thou hadst surely found it; but there required the aid of Heaven to direct them, and this he perceived not, and fell in the prime of youth, ere the first bright bloom of life was well past.

Elizabeth! if beauty, sensibility, genius, urbanity of mind, or enthusiasm of virtue, could have saved thee, thou hadst now lived the pride and pleasure of thy friends, the ornament of thy country, and the delight of thy family; but thy virtue, thy talents, thy passions, were unrestrained by the precepts, the spirit of piety; and they led thee to

errors

errors which crushed thee; but thou didst fall to rise—repentance followed thy deviation—and thou art happy.

One grave contains this hapless pair, and neither the dews of summer, or the snows of winter, impede the prayers of Walter Darnley, who, on its green turf couch, offers up the prayers of a heart conscious of error, even of error allied to that we have been describing.

FINIS.

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